



www.wataugaschools.org

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Student/Parent Handbook for Pre-Kindergarten – Eighth Grade

Each school may supplement this handbook with information specific to that school. Parents and students are encouraged to contact their school office or check their school website to review any additional guidelines that may apply at their school. Any school information that you need will be provided in printed form on request.

Table of Contents and Additional Information Resources

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Absences/Tardies/Early Check Out/Transportation Changes	2	4400 Attendance; 4400-R Attendance K-8 Schools; 4210 Release of Students from School
Animals	n/a	4203 Animals at School; 5029 Service Animals in Schools
Behavior and Discipline	3	4300 Student Behavior Policies; 4300-R Rules of Conduct and Procedures for Student Suspensions; 4302 School Plan for Management of Student Behavior; 4302-R Rules for Use of Seclusion and Restraint; 4307 Disciplinary Action for Exceptional Children/Students with Disabilities; 4315 Disruptive Behavior; 4335 Criminal Behavior; 4342 Student Searches; <i>Also see topics of Bullying, Dress Code, Drugs/Substances, Cell Phones and Technology, and Weapons in this table of contents</i>
Bullying	n/a	4015 Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Complaint Procedures; 4021 Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying
Cafeteria/School Meals, Free/reduced Price Meals, Bringing Food from Home	3	Menus, prices, free/reduced price meal information, and a link for online payments are available through the website.
Cell Phones and Technology Use	3	3225/4312/7320 Technology Responsible Use; 3226/4205 Internet Safety; 4318 Use of Wireless Communication Devices
Changing Schools	n/a	5.02.50 Student Assignments; 4150 School Assignment and 4150-R School Assignment Procedure
Change in Phone or Address	3	Not applicable
Closings and Delays	4	<i>School Closing Guide</i> on the website
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Dress Code	4	4316 Student Dress Code;4316-R Student Dress Code Procedures
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Additional Questions?

If you have questions that are not addressed in this handbook or the information sources listed in the table of contents, please contact your school office and/or check the website. We will do everything possible to answer your questions and address any concerns.

Absences, Tardies, Early Check Outs, and Changes in Afternoon Transportation

Absences: A note explaining the reason for a student’s absence must be signed by the parent or legal guardian and given to the child’s teacher within three school days of the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused until this note is received by the teacher. A student checked out of school before 11:15 a.m. will be counted as absent that day. Board Policies 4400 and 4400-R list the grounds for excused absences and the consequences for excessive absences and tardies. Board policies are available online through the website or on request from your school office.

Students may make up work missed during excused absences, but it is the student’s responsibility to ask for any assignments that may have been missed. Additional homework may be assigned and evaluated at the discretion of the teacher and principal. All missed work must be turned in within three days after the student returns to school or as directed by the teacher.

Tardies: Students who are tardy must be signed in by a parent or legal guardian at the school office. The student will take the tardy slip received at the office and give it to the teacher upon entering the classroom.

Early Check Outs: If a student must leave school early for a medical appointment or other essential reason, he/she must be signed out at the school office by a parent or legal guardian. The student will remain in the classroom until called by the office and must sign in at the office after they return from an appointment.

Changing Afternoon Transportation Plans: Parents designate on the student’s enrollment form whether the student will leave school on foot, on a bus, or ride home in a car. If the child needs to go home by a different method, the parent/guardian should notify the teacher in writing of this change. The child will not be permitted to alter the usual arrangements without proof that the parent

has approved a change. To help us keep your child safe, please do not rely on phone calls to notify the school of changes in transportation arrangements.

If a student is to leave school with someone other than a parent or guardian at any time, the parent/guardian must provide the teacher with a signed, written note naming the additional person(s) authorized to pick up the student. Parents are encouraged not to request changes in afternoon transportation except in an emergency.

Afterschool and Holiday/Snow Day Programs

Each elementary school offers an afterschool program from 2:30-6:00 p.m. for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. A holiday/snow day program at Hardin Park School is open to students in kindergarten through fifth grade in all schools from 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. on teacher workdays, snow days, and most holidays. Fee information for these programs is available through the website. Child care subsidies for both programs are available to eligible families from the Department of Social Services.

Behavior and Discipline Policies

Each school has some discretion to establish its own guidelines for what aspects of student behavior to emphasize with its faculty and students, but fundamental practices for the district are governed by Board policies. Most applicable policies are listed at the beginning of this handbook under the topic headings of Behavior and Discipline, Bullying, Cell Phones and Technology, Dress Code, Drugs/Substances, and Weapons. These policies are available on the website and a printed copy will be provided on request in any school office. Corporal punishment is prohibited in the Watauga County Schools. We appreciate your support in encouraging positive behavior and respectful attitudes in our schools.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Cell phones and other student-owned portable electronic devices shall not be turned on or used by students during the school day or on school buses except as directed by a school employee. A first violation of this policy will result in confiscation of the device until the end of the school day. On a second violation, the device will be turned over to the school office where it may be picked up only by the student's parent or guardian. Subsequent violations may result in revocation of cell phone/device privileges for the remainder of the school year or other consequences at the discretion of the principal.

Change of Address or Phone

If your contact information changes, it is extremely important to notify the school office so that we can update your phone and address information. Current phone numbers are essential so that we can contact you in the event of an emergency, including notification of school closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals for winter weather.

Cafeteria/School Meals and Bringing Food from Home

Breakfast and lunch are served in school cafeterias and we encourage all families to take advantage of this service and to fill out an application for free and reduced price meals. Applications for free and reduced price meals will be given to all families at the start of the school year. Applications may also be obtained and submitted anytime throughout the school year.

For the 2017-18 school year, breakfast is \$1.50 for all grades. Lunch is \$2.65 for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade and \$2.85 for grades 9-12. Payments on a student's account can be made in the school cafeteria or through the link for cafeteria online payment on the WCS website. Adults can purchase breakfast on a per item basis and a complete lunch for \$3.50.

Students may bring food from home for lunch, but all food must be eaten in the cafeteria during the student's lunch period. If you provide food for your child from a restaurant, please place the food in an unmarked bag or other container with no logos or advertising.

Closings, Delayed Openings, and Early Dismissals Due to Weather

Changes in the school schedule due to winter weather or other factors are announced via AlertNow automated phone and text messages, by e-mail, on the WCS website, via Twitter (@scottelliott_nc), through local news media, and on the recorded Snow Line message at 264-0200. Please be sure the data manager at your school has your current contact information to ensure that you receive these notifications. School closings and delayed openings will be announced before 6:30 a.m. and early dismissals will be announced as soon as the decision is made. Note that the afterschool program does not operate when schools are dismissed early due to inclement weather.

Contacting, Visiting, and Volunteering at School

To protect instructional time for all students, please avoid calling students or teachers during the school day. Calls will not be forwarded to classrooms but emergency messages will be relayed to students from the school office. Teachers will accept and return phone calls after the end of the school day. Please allow 48 hours for teachers to respond to an e-mail. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, you may want to call the school to ensure the message was not caught in a spam filter.

We ask that parents not visit a classroom during the school day without prior arrangements with the teacher. All campus visitors, including parents and other family members, must obtain a visitor's pass at the front office to enter the school building during the instructional day. All school volunteers who will work directly with students, including parents, need to have a background check completed first. The background check form is available through the website or on request from a school office. The policies on volunteers in schools (5015, School Volunteers) and visiting schools (5020, Visitors to the Schools) are available on the website or on request from a school office.

Dress Code

The requirements for student dress are set out in Board policies 4316 and 4316-R. Key elements of these policies are outlined below.

Watauga County School students shall dress in a manner that is appropriate and conducive to a safe learning environment. The following standards cover appropriate student dress:

- Sun glasses, hats, caps, and all other head coverings shall not be worn in the building.
- Shoes shall be worn at all times in the school building and on the school campus.
- Clothing and accessory items that have printed statements or pictures that are plainly offensive, threatening, vulgar, lewd, obscene, or in conflict with the educational mission of the school shall not be permitted.
- Profanity on clothing shall not be permitted.
- Clothing, accessory items and jewelry promoting activities which are illegal to minors such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or lewd sexual messages shall not be worn.
- Clothing, accessory items, and jewelry that tend to substantially interfere with the educational process or which have in the past substantially interfered with the educational process shall not be permitted. Before starting disciplinary action against the student, the administrator will make a reasonable assessment as to the disruptive nature of the clothing, accessory item, or jewelry. Such assessment shall be in writing.
- No undergarments shall be visible.
- No bathing suits shall be worn.
- No pajamas shall be worn.
- Midriffs, waist, and hips shall be covered.
- The waistband of all pants, shorts and skirts shall be worn above the hips at all times.
- All tops, shirts, and blouses shall be closed on the sides, back, and front. The sleeves shall cover the shoulders. Elementary principals may use discretion when dealing with younger students.

- Private body parts and undergarments shall be covered and not visible when moving, standing, bending or sitting.
- No chains, studded or spiked necklaces/bracelets that could be considered weapons are to be worn.
- Exceptions to this policy may be made by school administration on an individual basis for a bona fide religious, medical, or other appropriate reason.

The rules of this policy may be waived by the school administration for school approved activities. Any items not addressed by the policy are left to the discretion of the school administration.

Dress Code Consequences

- **First Offense:** The teacher will request a correction of the inappropriate dress. Students may go to their locker for proper clothing, to the office for clothing, or call home for their parent to bring the item(s) of clothing needed.
- **Second Offense:** Referral is made to the office where the principal requests a correction of the inappropriate dress. Students may go to their locker for the proper clothing, to the office for clothing, or call home for a parent to bring the item(s) of clothing needed. The parent will receive a call or letter to report this as the second incident.
- **Third Offense:** In-School Suspension for one day. The administrator will notify the parent and require a conference with the parent and student.
- **Additional Offenses:** The administrator refers to Watauga County Board of Education student behavior policies as appropriate.

School Buses

To request school bus service, please fill out a school bus transportation request form and turn in the form at the school office. This form is available through the website or on request from the school office.

Riding the school bus is a privilege and not an absolute right. Students who fail to practice respectful conduct and who do not consistently comply with directions of the driver and school guidelines for appropriate behavior on the bus may lose the privilege of school bus transportation. Expectations for student behavior and the consequences for misbehavior on school buses are covered in Board policy 6350, School Bus Regulations. This policy is available online through the website or on request from a school office.

Limited bus routes will be used during periods of winter weather when main roads are clear of ice and snow but less traveled roads may still be hazardous. The use of limited routes will be announced on school websites, the snow line at 264-0200, and via phone messages and e-mail. Please check your school website for details about limited bus routes for your school. Note that individual bus routes are occasionally subject to change based on road conditions specific to each route; the school or bus driver will contact families affected by these changes.

School Fees

School fees are \$7 for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, \$8 for grades 6-7, and \$25 for eighth grade. These fees are due at the start of the school year. No fees are charged for pre-kindergarten students. Additional fees may apply for school field trips and other special activities. If payment of fees may create a hardship, a fee waiver application is available from the WCS website or from any school office.

School Hours

Students may be dropped off at school no earlier than 7:15 a.m. School cafeterias will serve breakfast beginning at this time. Each school will inform parents and students of the school's schedule for when students must be on campus and in their classrooms.

Students are dismissed from school at 2:30 p.m. Please note that no student is to remain at school after 2:45 p.m. except when directed by a teacher or participating in a school-approved activity. On scheduled early release days, students are dismissed at 12:00 p.m. and lunch will be provided before dismissal.

School offices are open from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. The school system central office is open from 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Summer hours may vary so please call ahead or check the website before visiting a school office during the summer.

Student Health and Safety

Asbestos: All buildings owned by the Watauga County Schools were originally inspected in 1988 to determine locations of Asbestos Containing Building Materials (ACBM) as required by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). Re-inspections of all school facilities were conducted in 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, and August 2007.

As a result of the inspections, an Asbestos Management Plan was developed for all school facilities. The plan includes all known ACBM locations and is available for inspection in the administrative office of each building. The majority of ACBM within school system buildings has been removed and properly disposed of. The remainder is contained within floor tile, which presents a very low risk of exposure when properly maintained.

If you have specific questions relating to asbestos in schools, please contact Maintenance Director Daniel Clark at 264-6393 between 7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Drugs/Illegal Substances: All violations of criminal law on school property will be reported to law enforcement, the superintendent, and to the child's parents, in that order. The school system policy on substances is 4325 Drugs and Alcohol. It is available online through the website or on request from your school office.

Illness & When to Keep Students Home: Please help us protect the health of students and school personnel by keeping students home in the event of contagious health conditions. For more specific guidance, please review the guidelines Keeping Students Home for Illness or Disease, available on the website or on request from school offices.

Immunizations: Immunization requirements are addressed in Board policy 4110, Immunizations and Health Requirements. This policy is available through the website or on request from your school office.

Medication: School personnel cannot give students prescription or non-prescription medication, including cough drops, aspirin, cough syrup, sun screen, lip balm and other over the counter medications, without an authorization for medication form completed by you and your physician. Parents must provide the completed form along with the medication in the original container, a description of the dosage and method of administration, and any devices (teaspoons, dosage-sized cup, etc.) necessary to ensure proper dosage. The required medication authorization form is available on the website and from school offices. The school system policy for medications (6125, Administering Medications to Students) is available through the website and on request from your school office.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Statement: The school system uses IPM best practices as part of the regular maintenance program for school facilities and has adopted a related policy as required by state law. The Pest Management policy (policy 9205) emphasizes a preventive approach to minimize pesticide use. Parents, guardians, and school employees will be notified in writing at least 72 hours in advance of the use of a controlled pesticide. The policy is available through the website or on request from your school office.

Special Health Concerns: Parents/guardians are responsible for making sure that the school is aware of any special health conditions or risk factors for children in their care. A written health plan for such situations should be provided to the school. The school nurse is available to help with the plan as needed.

Tobacco: Our schools are tobacco free. The use, display, or possession of tobacco products by students is prohibited at all times on school grounds, in school vehicles, and in all school activities. The use or display of tobacco products by school employees and other adults is also prohibited at all times on school grounds, in school vehicles, and in all school activities.

Weapons: Weapons are prohibited on campus unless authorized by the school for educational or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes, or for a school-approved program conducted under the supervision of an adult approved by the school authority. See Board policy 5027/7275, Weapons and Explosive Prohibited for additional details. It is available through the website or on request from your school office.

Teacher Qualifications

We are proud of the high quality teachers in the Watauga County Schools. We have the third highest proportion of teachers with National Board Certification out of the 115 school districts in North Carolina and the proportion of WCS teachers with graduate degrees is well above the state average. The teaching qualifications of your child's teachers are available to parents and guardians from the school principal on request.

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