

**Elementary**  
**Student and Family Handbook**  
**2024-2025**



**Okemos Public Schools**

**Bennett Woods**

**Cornell**

**Hiawatha**

**Okemos Public Montessori-Central**

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Updated August 2024

**Policy Statement**

The Okemos Student and Family Handbook is designed to provide a general overview of rules and expectations for the community. For a complete list and detailed content of policies of the Board of Education policies, please visit the Board policies page of our website.

## WELCOME TO OKEMOS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Welcome to another year of education in the Okemos Public Schools, where there is a strong tradition of success and progress for each elementary school child. We are committed to partnering with families to promote a strong educational foundation and the development of a well-rounded child. To accomplish this goal, we believe in continuing communication between home and school. This handbook is one way of establishing that link and it is intended as a way to help you manage the school year to your child's best advantage. Our mission is, "Together. . . educating with excellence and inspiring each learner for life."

Please review the handbook and utilize it as a guide to programs, policies and parent/guardian tips. After reviewing the booklet, you are welcome to call the school or visit your principal with any questions or concerns. Specific Board of Education policies on any of these issues or items can be obtained at the Board Office and on our district's website.

*John J. Hood*

Superintendent of Schools

Okemos Public Schools

### **Mission Statement**

Together...educating with excellence, inspiring each learner for life.

## INTRODUCTION

The elementary school years are perhaps the most important in a student's education. During this time, the Okemos Public Schools attempt to fill their students with the wonder of discovery, the satisfaction of accomplishment and a desire for success.

Most of the elementary school day is devoted to instruction in the language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics. We also provide subjects that add to the total academic, cultural and social growth of our student body. These include the Michigan Comprehensive Health Model, physical education, art, and music.

Each elementary school has a large media center equipped with traditional library resources and up-to-date instructional tools. Teachers use the media centers extensively to strengthen classroom learning programs and to acquaint their students with the tools of individual research.

Our elementary school teachers are dedicated to educating students well. Each is fully certified and uses a variety of proven techniques to stimulate the educational potential of all students. The classroom instructors are supported by specialized staff in reading, special education, speech/language therapy, social work, and English as a Second Language.

Every elementary school houses a childcare center offered through the Community Education Department. These programs provide a variety of recreation and educational activities during non-school hours between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Childcare services include before and after school, the other half of the kindergarten day, as well as holiday breaks, half days, and summer.

### **Introduction**

The beginning of this handbook introduces you to admission guidelines, daily programs, and services of the school district. The following information on many school matters will help guide you and your child in navigating a successful elementary career.

## POINTS OF CONTACT

### Elementary Schools

Bennett Woods, 706-5100  
 2650 Bennett Road, Okemos  
 Ms. Lauren Schefke, Principal, 706-5101  
[lauren.schefke@okemosk12.net](mailto:lauren.schefke@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Jen Rapson, Secretary, 706-5102  
[jennifer.rapson@okemosk12.net](mailto:jennifer.rapson@okemosk12.net)

Okemos Public Montessori, 706-5400  
 4406 N. Okemos Rd., Okemos  
 Ms. Kelly Sundeen, Principal, 706-5401  
[kelly.sundeen@okemosk12.net](mailto:kelly.sundeen@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Rose Sarmiento Temple, Secretary, 706-5402  
[rosemarie.st@okemosk12.net](mailto:rosemarie.st@okemosk12.net)

Cornell, 706-5300  
 4371 Cornell Road, Okemos  
 Ms. Tracy Ojero, Principal, 706-5301  
[tracy.ojero@okemosk12.net](mailto:tracy.ojero@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Jennifer Darjes, Secretary, 706-5302  
[jennifer.darjes@okemosk12.net](mailto:jennifer.darjes@okemosk12.net)

Hiawatha, 706-4500  
 1900 Jolly Road, Okemos  
 Mr. Joseph Corr, Principal, 706-4501  
[joseph.corr@okemosk12.net](mailto:joseph.corr@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Connie Lyke, Secretary, 706-4502  
[connie.lyke@okemosk12.net](mailto:connie.lyke@okemosk12.net)

### District Administration Building

4406 N. Okemos Road, Okemos 48864

Mr. John J. Hood, Superintendent  
[john.hood@okemosk12.net](mailto:john.hood@okemosk12.net), 706-5007  
 Ms. Rhianna Walworth,  
 Executive Assistant to Superintendent/BOE, 706-5002  
[rhianna.walworth@okemosk12.net](mailto:rhianna.walworth@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Stacy Bailey, Asst. Superintendent of Instruction  
[stacy.bailey@okemosk12.net](mailto:stacy.bailey@okemosk12.net), 706-5009  
 Ms. Stacey Molenda, Administrative Assistant, 706-5003  
[stacey.molenda@okemosk12.net](mailto:stacey.molenda@okemosk12.net)

Mr. Mario Martinez, Director of Human Resources  
 706-5006  
[mario.martinez@okemosk12.net](mailto:mario.martinez@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Sue Williams, Administrative Assistant, 706-5602  
[susan.williams@okemosk12.net](mailto:susan.williams@okemosk12.net)  
 Dr. Lara Slee, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
 706-5011  
[lara.slee@okemosk12.net](mailto:lara.slee@okemosk12.net)

### District Departments

Community Education, 706-5020  
 1826 Osage, Okemos 48864

Ms. Kim Burchman, Community Education Coordinator  
 706-5031  
[kim.burchman@okemosk12.net](mailto:kim.burchman@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Michelle Thompson, Administrative Assistant, 706-5023  
[michelle.thompson@okemosk12.net](mailto:michelle.thompson@okemosk12.net)

Food Service Department

Ms. Emily Swirsky, Director, 706-5040  
[emily.swirsky@okemosk12.net](mailto:emily.swirsky@okemosk12.net)  
 Ms. Amanda Patton, Administrative Assistant, 706-5017  
[amanda.patton@okemosk12.net](mailto:amanda.patton@okemosk12.net)

Media & Technology

Mr. Tom Isom, Director, 706-5030

	<a href="mailto:tom.isom@okemosk12.net">tom.isom@okemosk12.net</a> Ms. Kelly Goff, Administrative Assistant, 706-5004 <a href="mailto:kelly.goff@okemosk12.net">kelly.goff@okemosk12.net</a>
Operations Department	Mr. Brian Lieber, Director, 706-5057 <a href="mailto:mark.fargo@okemosk12.net">mark.fargo@okemosk12.net</a> Ms. Kelly Bianchi, Administrative Assistant, 706-5039 <a href="mailto:kelly.bianchi@okemosk12.net">kelly.bianchi@okemosk12.net</a>
Special Education	Ms. Heather Pricco, Director, 706-4828 <a href="mailto:heather.pricco@okemosk12.net">heather.pricco@okemosk12.net</a> Ms. Amy Pinkelman, Administrative Assistant, 706-4829 <a href="mailto:amy.pinkelman@okemosk12.net">amy.pinkelman@okemosk12.net</a>
Transportation Department	Ms. Corrinne Karpinski, Director, 706-5050 <a href="mailto:corrinne.karpinski@okemosk12.net">corrinne.karpinski@okemosk12.net</a> Mr. Darrin Ried, Administrative Assistant, 706-5050

### Points of Contact Reference Chart

District staff and administrators are available to help answer your questions and address your concerns. This chart can guide families to the person who can best help them get support at each step. This chart is also available on the district website.

NOTE: Chart for Visual Reference will be added once complete

## ATTENDANCE

### **Daily Attendance**

School attendance is an important responsibility of students and parents/guardians. Students should attend classes every day in order to receive full advantage of the programs. Whenever possible, family vacations should be scheduled to coincide with school breaks.

If a child is too sick to attend school in the morning, it is necessary to call the school. If a child is absent and the school has not been notified, the administrative assistant will call home to verify the absence. School personnel will bring excessive absences or tardiness to the parents'/guardians' attention. If the situation does not improve, involvement of the attendance officer, protective services, or loss of credit for the school year may be necessary.

If your child should become ill during the school day, you will be notified immediately. Be sure the school has emergency numbers to call in such cases. You should give the school these numbers when registering online. Please update the office when emergency numbers change.

### **Clarification of Excused vs Unexcused Absences**

Excused Absence An absence is recorded as "excused" when a student is not present, however communication regarding the missed time at school has occurred.

Unexcused Absence An absence is recorded as "unexcused" when a student is not present and communication regarding the missed time at school has NOT occurred.

### **Arriving and Leaving School**

Parents/guardians are asked to instruct children to arrive at school no earlier than 8:35 a.m.. Children are expected to leave school at the end of the school day. Many tasks and meetings related to students and school programs take place daily for staff before and after school. For these reasons, staff members are not available to supervise students before the opening of school or after the end of the school day. If a child is not picked up promptly after school, school personnel will contact people listed on the emergency card.

Contact the office and your student's teacher by 3:00 p.m. with any dismissal changes. If your child participates in childcare, please send a note or email to the childcare director whenever a change in plans occurs.



### **Arriving Late (Sign In Procedures)**

When a student arrives at school after 8:50 a.m., a parent/guardian must enter the front vestibule to sign in the student. The student will be marked tardy.

### **Early Dismissal (Sign Out Procedures)**

In order for a student to leave school early a parent/guardian must sign out the student in the front vestibule. You must give your child at least 5 minutes to gather their belongings and meet the parent/guardian at the front of the school upon arrival to check them out.

### **Extended Absence Policy**

Students who leave school for an extended absence (more than one week) will not be provided with assignments in advance. Parents or guardians may request textbooks, but the responsibility for learning during this period lies with the family.

#### Planned Absences, Personal Convenience Absences, Trips/Vacations:

Students are expected to attend classes while school is in session. The school calendar includes generous vacation periods, so absences for trips or personal convenience during school time are discouraged.

- Students and families are responsible for making necessary arrangements for missed coursework and assessments with their teachers and must notify teachers in advance of the absence.
- Students must request homework prior to departure and arrange a time to make up missed tests or quizzes (if appropriate) at a time acceptable to the teacher.

#### Missed Assignments/Work:

- If a student has been absent for more than two days, parents should call the office before 9 a.m. on the third day to arrange for assignment pick-up. A 24-hour notice is necessary to gather assignments since staff are teaching during the school day. Assignments can be picked up in the office after school.

#### Additional Information:

- In cases of excessive absences, a physician's note may be required.
- The school may request the district nurse to make a home visit to determine if any help is needed.
- For prolonged illness or absence due to contagious disease, the principal may require a physician's certificate for re-admission to school.

## OPERATING GUIDELINES

### **Enrollment/Admission**

Prospective students to the Okemos Public Schools should register as soon as possible here: <https://www.okemosk12.net/Page/9485>. The Okemos Public Schools will request official records from a student's previous school when parents/guardians complete the necessary form. All children entering the Okemos Public Schools for the first time must present a valid birth certificate, proof of residence, and proof of immunizations. The medical records should specify the day, month and year immunizations were given against measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and polio. The school district is required to exclude students who do not comply with the state's immunization law.

The general practice is that students attend the Okemos school of their residence. However, it is recognized that parents/guardians occasionally request consideration for a child to attend a school within the Okemos district that is outside the boundary established for the child's residence. This is referred to as In-District Transfer and more specific information is available in [school board policy 5117.2](#) by April 27 prior to the beginning of the next school year or prior to a change in residence within the district during the school year.

Children are eligible for kindergarten if they reach their fifth birthday by September 1 of the given year and their parents/guardians live in the school district. Parents/guardians of children who reach their 5th birthday between September 2 and December 1 may complete a waiver for their child to attend Kindergarten.

### **Child Custody**

A child's custody papers and any court restrictions on non-custodial parents must be on file in the school office. Release of a child to a non-custodial parent can only be prohibited when an official court document is on file stating the child may not be released to the non-custodial parent. Non-custodial parents may review report cards, newsletters and information on their child's progress when requested. Custodial parents are encouraged to inform school officials of any concerns or dangerous situations related to their children.

### **Dress Code**

Dress Code Philosophy

The dress code for students attending Okemos Public Schools supports equitable educational access and is intentionally written in a manner that does not reinforce stereotypes or increase

marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income or body type/size.

We Believe . . .

- Students should be able to dress comfortably for school and engage in the educational environment without fear of discipline or body shaming

School staff should support a positive school environment that focuses on the development of the whole child without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement

- The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s)
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/self-expression

### **Enrichment Activities**

Thousands of people will use our buildings and grounds after school for Community Education programs this year. As residents, you and your children can enroll in year-round recreation, enrichment, or educational programs. A brochure describing all Community Education offerings is mailed to each home two times a year. The types of classes depend upon the number of interested instructors and students. The brochure can be found online at <https://www.okemosk12.net/domain/82>. A complete listing of courses and registration is available online at [www.okemosonline.com](http://www.okemosonline.com). Club opportunities are available for enrichment at each elementary school.

### **Lunches**

Okemos Public Schools Department of Food & Nutrition Services is committed to providing and serving foods that best enhance our students' academic, athletic and personal performance. All of our menus are designed to meet the USDA nutritional guidelines that ensure healthy offerings to all students. The complete lunch includes a choice of entree, two servings of fruit and/or vegetables, a serving of grain and a choice of milk. A self-serve "Fruit-Veggie-Grain Bar" is included with each lunch. Menus are sent home each month and are also available on the [www.okemosk12.net](http://www.okemosk12.net) website. Meatless, pork, and turkey products are noted on the menu. An entrée choice count is taken each morning in the classroom.

We encourage all families to complete an application for free or reduced priced meals. Applications are sent home at the beginning of the school year and are available in your

school office and on the website here: <https://www.okemosk12.net/Page/494>. You are welcome to submit an application at any time throughout the school year if your household income changes. Call 517-706-5040 for more details.

Every student has an account that is computerized and accessed by the student number or by name. Parents/guardians have various options of making deposits into the account or the child can take money to school. See the Food and Nutrition Service webpage at <https://www.okemosk12.net/domain/68> for more details.

### **Recess**

Because fresh air and exercise have been proven to promote physical, social, emotional and educational growth of students, each school provides at least two outdoor recesses daily, weather permitting. It is very important that children wear appropriate clothes for outdoor recess, including items such as: hats, coats, boots, snow pants and gloves or mittens. Please label all clothing with children's names.

Children should be in school only when they are well enough to go outside. A doctor's statement is required if a child is to be excused from recess.

In the cases of extreme weather, students will have indoor recess and will follow indoor arrival and dismissal procedures. Extreme cold temperature is considered 0° F or below (including wind chill) and extreme hot temperature will follow the MHSAA guidelines for outdoor activities. [See MHSAA guidelines for heat here.](#) [See MHSAA guidelines for cold here.](#)

## TRANSPORTATION

### **Getting to and from School Safely**

Heavy traffic in school areas creates a need for school walkers to carefully observe safety rules. When parents/guardians opt to drop off or pick up children by car, they must obey the designated carline procedures to ensure the safety of our children.

### **Bus Transportation**

Transportation is an important part of a child's daily routine as it begins and ends each day for them. At the Transportation Department, we make every effort to ensure that each child's experience is a positive one. Our drivers attend school each year to update them on safety procedures and to give them the competitive edge to meet the daily challenges they may encounter. We encourage parents/guardians to communicate with their child's driver as we have found that this reinforces a positive relationship between student and driver. A number of rules have been issued by the Transportation Department to help make bussing as efficient and safe as possible and to comply with state regulations. We ask parents/guardians to review the bus rules with their children. Bus routes are occasionally changed because of enrollments early in the school year. Parent/guardian patience is appreciated during this transition period.

The conduct of a student while riding to and from school should be an extension of good classroom behavior. Misbehavior at a bus stop or on the bus is reported to the student's principal and handled as a disciplinary incident. Riding the bus is a privilege for students and can be revoked if repeated violations of the following rules occur:

1. On the bus students are expected to be courteous and respectful to the bus driver.
2. Students are to remain seated while a bus is moving.
3. The aisle must be clear at all times.
4. Students are to keep heads, limbs, and hands inside the bus at all times.
5. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a quiet, orderly manner.
6. Only "bus" students may ride the buses. A student may not travel by school bus or walk to the home of another student unless both students have written parental/guardian permission, co-signed by the principal or designee. Such plans must be made in advance. Also, office personnel cannot write permission notes for children.
7. Students may not eat on the school bus.

The following general rules contribute to the safety of all school bus passengers:

1. All bus riders must register with the driver the first day. Students may not switch buses.

2. Students are expected to arrive at the bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time.
3. Students are urged to be alert to traffic when boarding or leaving the bus.
4. Transportation by parents/guardians is not advised. However, parents/guardians who drive to school should park in designated parking areas. Do not for any reason block fire or bus lanes.
5. Kindergarten and first grade students should wear identification for the first two weeks of school stating the child's name, address, telephone number and bus number.

### **Bikes, Scooters, Roller Blades, and Skateboards**

Because safety is the most important consideration for transportation to and from school, each school's location determines whether bikes, roller blades, scooters and/or skateboards are allowed. If your child's school permits these, parental/guardian permission is required. The school is not responsible for loss or damage to bikes, roller skates, roller blades, or skateboards.

If permitted at your child's school, the following rules apply:

1. Children must follow safe practices.
2. Children must wear helmets and other protective equipment.
3. Bikes must be locked in bike racks with their own locks.
4. Bikes, roller blades, and skateboards must be left in the storage area during the school day.
5. Roller blades may not be worn inside buildings.
6. Children must stay clear of bus areas and parking lots unless accompanied by an adult.
7. Children must take their equipment home each night.
8. Privileges may be revoked if rules are broken.

## PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

A school district doesn't operate in a vacuum. It needs the cooperation, energy and ideas of parents/guardians to educate children effectively. Because students spend only about one-third of their waking hours in school, the importance of non-school experiences is obvious. If you want to help at home, the best instructional technique is a personal example. Researchers tell us the attitudes and values parents/guardians place on education, as well as the advice and personal guidelines they give, will have the greatest impact on how children behave and perform in the classroom.

### **Getting Your Child Off to a Good Start**

One way to maintain the excitement of the first days of school is to help your child prepare for the challenges of school. There are many things that you as a parent/guardian can do to ensure that your child is prepared for school each day.

1. Teach your children to be organized

School is their "job." Help them develop a system to assume the responsibilities of making sure homework assignments are complete and to have the supplies that are needed each day.

2. Children need a good night's sleep

It is very important that your child come to school rested every day. Establish an evening bedtime schedule for your child and stick to it.

3. Develop a calm morning routine

Allow enough time for a healthy breakfast and a timely school arrival.

4. Share your child's day

Your own reactions and attitudes will go a long way towards determining how your child feels about school, the teacher, and other students.

5. Read to and with children every day

Kids who "practice" their reading do better than those who don't.

6. Build a "can do" attitude in your child

When they try something hard, praise the effort. Help break a big project down into smaller tasks. Then praise your child as each step is completed. The process is as important as the product.

7. Join your school's parent/guardian group

Sign up to help in some way. When parents/guardians are involved, our children and schools both benefit.

### **Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences**

Fall and spring conferences are held for parents/guardians and teachers to discuss the learning progress of your student. The purpose of these conferences are to strengthen the collaboration between school and home. We strongly encourage all parents/guardians to attend.

### **Parent/Guardian Involvement**

All elementary schools provide many opportunities for parent/guardian involvement. You are invited to share your time and support in these worthwhile opportunities. Each elementary school has an active parent/guardian organization that works with building administrators and staff to provide support in a variety of ways. This includes providing funding for educational materials, hosting school events, and volunteering in various ways to support the school.

In addition to supporting at the school level, we invite you to share your ideas regarding school programs at meetings of the Board of Education. The seven trustees of the School Board are elected to represent the public in general policy-making and goal setting. The Board of Education generally meets the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:00 pm at the Administration Center, 4406 N. Okemos Road, Okemos. All meetings of the Board of Education are public and televised on our TV cable channel 23.



## COMMUNICATION

### Here's How We Communicate

There are a number of ways that our schools keep you informed of your child's progress and the educational activities of our school community. Schools use progress reports, parent/guardian-teacher conferences, emails, telephone calls, the district website ([www.okemosk12.net](http://www.okemosk12.net)), classroom and school newsletters for communication. Parents/guardians are encouraged to call or email us with questions, concerns, or comments. Non-custodial parents/guardians may request newsletters, copies of report cards, and dates for conferences.

### Please Talk With Us

It is important that you always have accurate information and receive timely answers to questions about school. Here are several suggestions to help you express your ideas more effectively:

- Get to know school principals and staff members. Attend school open houses, parent/guardian-teacher conferences, and other events. Learn what is going on in the classroom and what is expected from the students.
- Let the principal or staff member know when you are pleased about something, as well as when you are concerned or unsure.
- If an issue arises, please follow this protocol for communication:
  - First, contact the teacher/staff member directly involved
  - If your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, you can then contact the building administrator
  - If the matter is still unresolved, contact a central office administrator
- Communicate with the appropriate person by email or phone call. Be sure to provide sufficient details so that school staff can deal with each situation effectively.
- Be aware that answers or solutions may not come right away. Sometimes follow-up activities are required to obtain all the information and to study the implications before a question or concern can be answered or a suitable adjustment made.
- School officials cannot guarantee that each question will be answered or a situation adjusted to everyone's satisfaction. However, sincere attempts will be made to find an answer or solution that is fair and reasonable.

## VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

## School Visits

Okemos Public Schools welcome visits to our elementary buildings by parents/guardians. Classroom visits need to be limited in number and pre arranged with the principal and staff.

## Visitors/Volunteers

All visitors to the school during school day operational hours must follow the visitor management process established by the district. Failure to comply with such processes will hinder the safety and security of students, staff, and the building.

- **Name and Reason:** At the main entrance, each visitor will ring the video doorbell and will be asked for their name and reason for visiting before entering the vestibule.
- **One at a time:** Each visitor must individually be verified through the video doorbell before entering the vestibule. After verification, we ask that visitors do not hold the door open for anyone behind them. Each person should be verified before entering.
- **Office check in:** Visitors will be checked in through the main office and may be required to present photo identification. They must sign in and obtain a visitor's pass prior to entering the school.
- **Visitors pass:** All visitors must wear and be identified by a visitor's pass while in the building.
- **Office check out:** Before leaving the building, visitors must return the visitor's pass and check out with the office.
- **Item drop off:** If a visitor needs to drop off items for a student (lunch, homework, device, etc.), they can label and deposit those at that school's designated location. Visitors will not need to enter the building to drop off items.
- **Student pick up:** If a visitor plans to pick up a student during the school day or before the end of the day, please notify the school prior to dismissal. If you are picking up from an elementary school, call the main office. At the middle schools and high school, contact the registrar or attendance office.

See Board policy **3105 Visitors and Volunteers**

## HEALTH

Our school district follows the guidelines provided by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for managing communicable diseases in schools. These recommendations help us ensure a safe and healthy environment for all students, staff, and visitors.

### **AED Program and MI HEARTSafe Compliance**

Our school district is dedicated to the health and safety of our students, staff, and visitors. In accordance with the Michigan Schools Cardiac Emergency Response (CERP) laws and MI HEARTSafe recommendations, we have established a comprehensive AED (Automated External Defibrillator) program. This includes the strategic placement of AEDs throughout our facilities to ensure quick and efficient response in the event of a cardiac emergency. AEDs signs are clearly displayed above each machine and labeled on building maps for quick reference to include fire exits and shelter areas.

Our compliance to these guidelines emphasizes our commitment to providing a safe environment for everyone in our schools. We regularly train our staff in the use of AEDs and conduct emergency drills to maintain a state of readiness. This proactive approach ensures that we are prepared to handle cardiac incidents effectively, safeguarding the well-being of our school community.

### **Toilet Training**

Except when toilet training is part of the instructional program, students are expected to be fully toilet trained before the first day of school, unless otherwise specifically addressed in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.

The student's parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring that the student is toilet trained. The parent/guardian is also responsible for providing clean clothes for a student who may have toileting accidents.

No student will be punished or humiliated for soiling or wetting clothing or not using the toilet.

The building principal or designee should consider whether repeated toileting accidents are related to a disability.

Except when toilet training is part of the instructional program, staff will not assist a student with toileting unless directed to do so by the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.

See Board Policy ([5711](#))

## **Appointments**

If you need to pick up your child for an appointment during school hours, please follow the early dismissal protocol. Attendance is taken every morning and afternoon. When your child will be absent from school because of illness or an appointment, please email/call the teacher and the office to excuse your child.

## **Sickness**

One of the problems often confronting parents/guardians of school-age children occurs when a child complains of not feeling well on a school day. A decision must be made as to whether the child stays home or goes to school. How do you make the right decision? You don't want to keep your child home if your child really isn't sick, but you also don't want to send a sick child to school.

The information in this booklet is not intended as medical advice but to provide guidelines to be followed until your doctor can be contacted for an opinion. Unnecessary absence from school may have a negative effect on a student's attitude, work habits and progress.

## **Cold/COVID-19/Influenza, Fever**

The common cold presents the most frequent problem to parents/guardians. A child with cold symptoms and a persistent cough should not attend school, even if they have no fever. If your child complains of a sore throat and has no other symptoms, your child may go to school. If white spots can be seen in the back of the throat or if fever is present, keep your child home and call your doctor. If your child has strep throat, COVID-19, influenza, or any other contagious illness, please inform the school office.

A fever is a warning that all is not right with the body and is signaled by a body temperature of 101 degrees fahrenheit or higher. The best way to check for fever is with a thermometer. If it is hot, keep the child home until fever can be checked. Do not allow your child to return to school until your child has been free of fever for 24 hours without medication.

## **Rash**

A rash may be the first sign of one of childhood's many illnesses, such as chicken pox; a rash or "spots" may cover the entire body or may appear in only one area. Do not send a child with a rash to school until your doctor has said it is safe to do so.

## **Stomachache**

Consult your doctor if your child has a stomachache that is persistent or severe enough to limit their activity. A child with diarrhea or vomiting should be kept at home. Do not allow your child to return to school for 24 hours.

## **Head Lice**

Head lice can be transmitted where any group assembles regularly, especially among children whose hats and jackets hang close together. Itching or scratching may be a sign of lice, but sometimes there are no signs until you look closely. Please check your child's head frequently. Look around the ears and back of the neck. Be sure you have good light; stand near a window or use a lamp. Nits (lice eggs) look like little white spots hanging on a shaft of the hair. They are difficult to move or pull off the hair. Dandruff or scalp flakes move very easily. Nits do not.

If there are lice, notify the school and start treatment immediately.

## **Illness**

If your child is ill, please keep your child home from school. If your child is well enough to attend school, your child will be deemed well enough to participate in school activities and outdoor recess. Children unable to participate in school activities, such as gym or recess, must have a dated doctor's note specifying the reason and length of time they are to be excused. If your child becomes ill at school, office staff will try to reach you if the illness or injury requires treatment or requires your child be sent home. If you are not available, we will notify persons listed on the emergency card.

## **Accident Care**

Students, teachers and supervisors are asked to report school and playground accidents to the office, Reporting Accidents (see Board Policy [3403](#)). When necessary, an accident report is filled out and parents/guardians are called. If the action requires professional medical attention, the parent/guardian will be asked to pick up the child in the office. Parents/guardians must update emergency information annually so they can be contacted in case of an accident or illness. The following information is recorded.

1. Home/cell phone numbers
2. Place of employment and phone number
3. The name and phone number of others who could pick up a child.

In rare instances a child must be transported to a hospital by ambulance. School personnel will accompany the child until a parent/guardian arrives at the hospital.

**Medication**

All medications, both prescription and non-prescription, must be kept in the school office and administered by an adult. The medication must be kept in a labeled container as prepared by the pharmacy, physician, or pharmaceutical company and labeled with the dosage and frequency of administration and accompanied by a signed physician's authorization. The only exception to this is when the student's physician allows the student to carry medication on his/her person to allow for immediate and self-determined administration. This exception needs to be authorized by the physician on both the prescription and non-prescription forms. If students decide to self-administer medications the nurse may ask your student to demonstrate that they can administer the medication properly on their own.

School staff are not allowed to give the first dose of any medication. No over the counter or prescription medication of any kind including vitamins and supplements are allowed on school premises without a signed authorization form from a physician.

The signed authorization must be provided to the school using the form included on the last page of the handbook and on our school's websites. More specific information on medication (including forms) is available here: Medications ([5703](#))

**Infectious Diseases**

The following is a chart of some of the common infectious diseases. Parents/Guardians should ask their doctor for information regarding the communicable period of other contagious diseases not listed below.

Disease	Incubation Period	Communicable Period	Board Policy
Chicken Pox	10-21 days, average 14-16 days	5 days before rash to 5 days after rash starts	Communicable Diseases (Policy <a href="#">3404</a> )  Immunizations and Communicable Diseases (Policy <a href="#">5713</a> )
COVID-19	See COVID handbook	See COVID handbook	
Influenza	24-72 hours	1 day before onset of symptoms to about 7 days from the first symptoms in children	
Measles	8-13 days, average 10 days	4 days before rash and for up to 4 days after	

Rubella	14-21 days, average 16-18 days	7 days before and 7 days after rash onset	Student Illness and Injury (Policy <a href="#">5702</a> )
Mumps	2 to 3 weeks, average 18 days	Most contagious 48 hours before swelling and 5-9 days after	
Scarlet Fever	2-5 days	Variable	
Strep Throat	1-7 days, average 2-4 days	Variable. If not treated can be contagious for weeks	
Impetigo	4-10 days	As long as pus filled lesions continue to drain	
Scabies	Several days or weeks before itching is noticed	Until mites and eggs are destroyed by chemical treatment	
Pink Eye	27-72 hours	Until under medical care and drainage from eye has cleared	
Fifth Disease	4-20 days	Usually 3-5 days before rash	
Head Lice	6-10 days	Until eggs and lice in hair, clothing and bedding have been destroyed	Lice, Nits and Bed Bugs (Policy <a href="#">5709</a> )

### Understanding Concussion

Beginning on July 1, 2013 Public Acts 342 and 343 (Concussion Laws) will go into effect in the State of Michigan. These laws require all levels of schools and youth sports organizations to educate and train staff, notify parents/guardians of the law, and monitor all possible youth concussions or head injuries. Please read this fact sheet and sign as acknowledgement that you have been provided this information. Refer to Board of Education Policy [#5712 Concussion Awareness](#)

### Some Common Symptoms

Headache	Balance Problems	Sensitive to Noise	Poor Concentration	Not "Feeling Right"
Pressure in the Head	Double Vision	Sluggishness	Memory Problems	Feeling Irritable
Nausea/Vomiting	Blurry Vision	Haziness	Confusion	Slow Reaction Time
Dizziness	Sensitive to Light	Fogginess	"Feeling Down"	Sleep Problems
		Grogginess		

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a fall, bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head

and brain to move quickly back and forth. A concussion can be caused by a shaking, spinning or a sudden stopping and starting of the head. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. A concussion can happen if you haven't been knocked out.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussions can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If the student reports any symptoms of a concussion, or if you notice symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away. A student who may have had a concussion should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says they are okay to return to play.

### **IF YOU SUSPECT A CONCUSSION:**

1. **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY** – A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for the student to return to regular activities, including sports. Don't hide it, report it. Ignoring symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often makes it worse.
2. **KEEP YOUR STUDENT OUT OF PLAY** – Concussions take time to heal. Don't let the student return to play the day of injury and until a health care professional says it's okay. A student who returns to play too soon, while the brain is still healing, risks a greater chance of having a second concussion. Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults. Repeat or second concussions increase the time it takes to recover and can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting the student for a lifetime. They can be fatal. It is better to miss one game than the whole season.
3. **TELL THE SCHOOL ABOUT ANY PREVIOUS CONCUSSION** – Schools should know if a student had a previous concussion. A student's school may not know about a concussion received in another sport or activity unless you notify them.

### **SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Appears dazed or confused
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Can't recall events prior to or after a hit or fall
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes



## **CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS:**

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. A student should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body s/he exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people/places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of coordination consciousness should be taken seriously.)

## **HOW TO RESPOND TO A REPORT OF A CONCUSSION:**

If a student reports one or more symptoms of a concussion after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, s/he should be kept out of athletic play the day of the injury. The student should only return to play with permission from a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. During recovery, rest is key. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Students who return to school after a concussion may need to spend fewer hours at school, take rests breaks, be given extra help and time, spend less time reading, writing or on a computer. After a concussion, returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be monitored by a healthcare professional.

Remember: Concussion affects people differently. While most students with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.

## POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

### Introduction

The district strives to provide a system that will support students' efforts to manage their own behavior and promote academic achievement. Our positive behavior support systems promote pro-social behavior and respectful, productive learning environments through a proactive, skill-building instructional approach to behavior. This section deals with specific behavioral expectations that parents/guardians are encouraged to review with their student(s) to assure the most positive educational atmosphere in each elementary school. The Board of Education and staff of Okemos Public Schools completely support the vast majority of parents/guardians who value a learning environment that is built upon positive behavior and citizenship from all students.

### Behavior Expectations

In our elementary schools, students are expected to be:

1. Respectful or Kind
2. Responsible
3. Safe

Direct instruction is provided by the teacher so that all students can state the behavioral expectations as well as perform the expected behaviors in all settings of the school (ex. classrooms, playground, hallways, lunchroom, library, etc.) In addition, each teacher establishes classroom rules and systems that acknowledge positive behavior and promote a "class community." Our staff makes every attempt to be proactive and child-centered, while supporting each student in developing behaviors that are appropriate for the school setting. Behavioral support and/or disciplinary action may be taken when students do not comply with school behavior expectations. Examples of misbehavior include but are not limited to:

- Defiance/non-compliance
- Disrespect
- Disruption
- Inappropriate language
- Lying/Cheating
- Physical contact/Physical aggression/Fighting
- Property Misuse
- The propping or opening of exterior building doors to allow unauthorized persons to enter the building during the school day.

- Theft
- Technology Violation
- Vandalism

In general, behavioral incidents will be handled by the administrator or teachers through conferences with students, ongoing parent/guardian communication, and positive behavioral intervention and support. When appropriate, this may include disciplinary actions. The Board of Education has adopted specific policies to deal with serious misbehavior.

### **Personal Property/Belongings**

The following are five personal property subjects which students may encounter at one time or another.

1. School materials – Required textbooks and related learning materials are supplied free of charge. However, students are responsible for reasonable care and safe-keeping of all materials. Students and parents/guardians must pay for items that are lost or damaged during the school year.
2. Clothing – All student outerwear such as coats, hats, boots and gloves should be labeled. Each elementary school has a location for unclaimed items that can be checked by students or parents/guardians when items are lost.
3. Pets – Pets are not allowed at school without permission from the classroom teacher/administrator. An exclusion to this policy includes the Okemos Wolf Pack therapy dogs.
4. Money – Parents/Guardians should not allow students to carry more money than needed for lunch.

### **Eating at School**

School lunch rules are necessary to maintain order while many students are in the cafeteria. Adult supervisors are present during this period. Students who abuse the guidelines below are subject to losing their lunchroom privileges.

- Students should listen to and show respect for the lunchroom supervisors.
- Students should use an indoor voice and use good table manners.
- Students should remain seated until finished eating.
- All garbage should be disposed of in proper containers.
- No food is to be taken or eaten outside the cafeteria.

## Playground

These are the guidelines for safe and friendly playground activities during recess and lunch hours:

- Play in assigned areas only.
- Use playground equipment properly. For example, swings and slides are to be used by only one person at a time and in a sitting position. All swinging is to be in the same direction, not side to side. No student is to run or walk up the slide.
- Hard balls, such as baseballs and golf balls, must not be brought to school.
- Throwing of snow or rocks is not allowed. Sliding on the ice is also forbidden.
- No tackle games are allowed.
- Fighting and other roughhouse activities are forbidden.
- Enter the building quietly at the end of each recess or playground period.

## Serious Behavior Infractions

The following are types of serious behavior infractions that most likely will result in formal disciplinary action for an elementary student as outlined in board policies **3402 Drills, Plans, and Reports** and **5201 Investigations, Arrests, and Other Law Enforcement Contact**.

1. Abusive, offensive and threatening language; harassment/humiliation of others; and bullying, including cyberbullying, are prohibited. Bullying shall be defined as any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, including cyberbullying, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one or more students either directly or indirectly. This includes "relational" bullying, defined as persuading others to reject another student (Policy 5143). Bullying can also be perceived as harassment and intimidation.
2. Physical aggression, fighting and other unsafe activities are forbidden. Repeated occurrences may result in loss of privileges or suspension.
3. Major damage to property.
4. Severe disruption to the educational environment or severe insubordination.
5. Violation of the district's policies and regulations overseeing the use of computer equipment and computer networks. (See Board Policies 6300: District Network Resources and Internet Safety; 6301: District Video Network, and 6302: District Web Server and Web Page Development. Infractions that Require Permanent Expulsion
6. Weapon-Free Schools. The possession and/or use of dangerous weapons. (See Board Policy 5146: Weapon-Free School Zone and MCL 380.1311, 380.1313). Michigan law requires the Board of Education to permanently expel a student who possesses a dangerous weapon in a weapon free school zone, which includes school property, and/or any vehicle used by a school to transport students to and from school property.

School officials will immediately contact the student's parent/legal guardian and local law enforcement officials in the event a student is found in possession of a dangerous weapon or an object which may be used to cause harm to others.

7. The Michigan Revised School Code also requires school districts to permanently expel students from all Michigan public schools who commit Criminal Sexual Conduct at school as defined by Michigan law (See Board Policy 5116.2: Sexual Harassment and MCL 750.520 bg) and Arson (MCL 380.1311), which is defined as intentionally setting fire or attempting to set a fire or doing any act that results in the starting of a fire, or aiding, counseling, inducing, persuading, or procuring another to do such an act.
8. Administrators will contact law enforcement any time a student engages in suspected illegal conduct that jeopardizes the health or safety of other students at school or a school related activity or en route to or from school. Administrators will notify law enforcement when required by the Statewide School Safety Information Policy and to make all other reports and provide all other notifications required by the School Safety Information Policy or any state or federal law. In addition, administrators will refer a student who is expelled for (1) possession of a dangerous weapon; (2) arson; (3) criminal sexual conduct; or (4) physically assaulting an employee, volunteer, or contractor to the county department of social services or the county community mental health agency and to notify the student's parent/guardian (or the student if the student is at least age 18 or is an emancipated minor) of the referral within 3 calendar days of the expulsion.

### **Behavioral Threat Assessment**

Behavioral Threat Assessment is recognized as the standard of best practice for preventing targeted violence in schools. Behavioral Threat Assessment is a systematic process and methodology to:

1. Identify threats and recognize other forms of concerning behavior and communications.
2. Assess the seriousness and potential for violence.
3. Manage, mitigate, and prevent violence and other adverse outcomes.

Okemos Public Schools are committed to identifying, assessing, and managing individuals who may pose a threat as set forth by the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), United States Secret Service publication, Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence.

Okemos Public Schools trained Threat Assessment teams are established in all schools and respond to reports of threats, concerning behaviors and/or communications by gathering

information, investigating the facts and circumstances, and assessing the potential seriousness and imminence of risk for violence or physical harm to self or others.

The Behavioral Threat Assessment process will follow policy established by the Board see 5714.01 - Behavioral Threat Assessment

[W Consolidated Revisions to OPS BTA Policy rev mhc 03142024.docx](#)

Additional information about the Okemos Behavioral Threat Assessment program and operations may be found on the Okemos website [\[provide link once published\]](#).

### **Search and Seizure**

The school authorities retain the right to search areas assigned to students (such as lockers, desks, computer accounts, e-mail messages, text messages, etc.). Students do not have any reasonable expectations that such areas are private.

Student personal property may be seized by school authorities if the items are illegal, stolen, prohibited or are determined to be a threat to the health, safety, or security of others. Items which are used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process may be temporarily removed from student possession.

School authorities may also search a student's person or personal property, to enforce school rules, if such authorities have a reasonable suspicion that items that are illegal, stolen, dangerous, prohibited or threaten safety or the educational process, are likely to be found on a student's person.

See Board policy [5103 Search and Seizure](#)

### **Disciplinary Action**

When self-discipline fails, disciplinary action by staff may be used to address student behavior. The administrator and teaching staff utilize progressive discipline, meaning that a continuum of consequences deemed appropriate for the level/frequency of misbehavior is employed, such as loss of privilege, time out of class, time in office, restitution/apology, conference with student, parent/guardian contact, in-school suspension, out of school suspension, etc. In an attempt to change behavior, removing student privileges prior to more significant disciplinary actions may be used. These privileges may include but are not limited to loss of: recess, after-school activities, in-house activities, field trips, and bus transportation. Increasing levels of disciplinary action will be used for continued or persistent misbehavior.

The administration, in its discretion, may also employ mediation, conflict resolution or restorative practices involving students, staff, parent/guardians and administrators, in an attempt to acquire a firm commitment for cessation of the inappropriate behavior. Restorative practices will typically be the first consideration to remediate offenses such as interpersonal

conflicts, bullying, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, damage to property, class disruption, harassment, and cyberbullying. In some cases, Mediation/conflict resolution focuses on building a common understanding of a conflict/situation through face to face dialogue in order to repair relationships and a sense of community.

Three (3) key questions that guide the process are:

1. What happened?
2. Who was affected and how?
3. How do we make things right?

The following procedures will be followed when serious infractions of school rules occur, such as those reviewed in "Serious Behavior Infractions."

- In School Suspension from class but attending school; student spends the time in a detention room/area.
- Short Term Suspension imposed by a building administrator for the remainder of the school day and/or up to one (1) to ten (10) days which may include extra and/or co-curricular activities.
- Long Term Suspension from school attendance imposed by the superintendent or assistant superintendent for eleven (11) to fifty-nine (59) school days, which may include extra and/or co-curricular activities. A suspended student is allowed full make up privileges of homework assignments, worksheets, tests, etc. Students under short and long term suspension are not allowed on any school property, in a school building, or admitted to any school function.

**Factors to Consider Before Suspending a Student:** Pursuant to state law, a teacher, an administrator, or the Board of Education, as appropriate, will consider the following factors before suspending a student from a class, subject, activity, or before suspending a student from school.

- The student's age;
- The student's disciplinary history;
- Whether the student has a disability;
- The seriousness of the behavior;
- Whether the behavior posed a safety risk;
- Whether restorative practices are a better option; and
- Whether lesser interventions would address the behavior.

Discipline involving students with disabilities will be applied in a manner consistent with applicable student discipline procedures as well as federal and state laws.

More detailed information regarding the district's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations is available in school board policy 5144.

### **Parent/Guardian Appeals for Suspension**

Based on the present status of school law, principals have the authority to temporarily separate or suspend a student from school. In such actions, these are the guidelines:

- A student shall be fully informed of the infraction, including the rationale for the action and condition of the suspension. A student has the right to respond to the allegations.
- The parents/guardians shall be notified by telephone or personal contact if a student is to be suspended from school.
- The personal contact to parents/guardians will be followed by a written communication stating the infraction, reasons and conditions of the suspension. A copy of the written communication shall also be placed in the student's file.

### **Appeal Procedures for Short Term Suspensions of 3-10 Days**

We have a review process for suspensions of one to two (1-2) school days. If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the disciplinary outcome, a conference will be scheduled with the principal or their designee. There is no further appeal process for suspension for less than three (3) days. Short term suspensions of three to ten (3-10) school days may be appealed following the procedures below:

- Level of Review: The principal or designee. A conference shall be scheduled with parent/guardian within two (2) school days of the request for appeal. Decisions will be rendered within two (2) school days of the conference. The principal or designee may uphold the suspension, establish an alternate suspension of lesser severity, or reverse the suspension in its entirety. The decision of the principal or designee shall be considered final
- During a suspension appeal, the suspension or that portion of the suspension remaining shall be held in abeyance until the appeal is completed. In unusual cases, where in the opinion of the principal or designee, the student or school personnel's safety, or school property would be endangered by returning the suspended student during the appeal, the principal may prohibit the student's return.



## **Appeal Procedures for Long Term Suspension**

Long term suspensions of eleven to fifty-nine (11-59) school days may be appealed (see Board Policy 5144). A written report of the suspension will be given to the parent/guardian. The report shall also include the student's appeal rights.

## **Expulsion and Expulsion Procedures**

Expulsion is, by definition, the termination of enrollment for an extended period of time in excess of ten (10) consecutive days. A student may be expelled only by action of the Board of Education following recommendation by the building principal or designee.

[Resources for Expulsion](#)

## **Permanent Expulsion (State Mandated)**

Termination of enrollment permanently, subject to possible reinstatement as prescribed by the Revised School Code. A student may be permanently expelled only by action of the Board of Education following recommendation by the building principal or designee. This action shall occur only in accordance with these procedures for expulsion (See Board Policy 5144). Matters pertaining to elementary students which will result in a recommendation for permanent expulsion to the Board of Education include arson (intentional setting of fires), criminal sexual conduct, and possession of a dangerous weapon. Reasonable and deliberate decisions will be made cooperatively by the administration and faculty in cases where serious extenuating circumstances exist.

## **Procedures for Expulsion**

1. Written notice shall be given to the student and parent or guardian of the charges of misconduct and of a hearing before the Board of Education.
2. The principal or designee may suspend a student pending the hearing, in which case the hearing shall be held at the earliest possible time.
3. The Board of Education shall conduct a hearing scheduled with the parent/guardian and school administration. The hearing will be conducted as a special meeting of the Board of Education in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The parents/guardians may request in writing that the hearing be conducted in a closed session meeting of the Board of Education as permitted by Section 8(b) of the Open Meetings Act. The student and parent or guardian may, at their own expense, be represented by legal counsel and shall have the right to call witnesses.
4. At the hearing, an opportunity for all sides to be heard in detail shall be provided according to the following outline:

- Opening statements by the board, school, and student or representative (usually the parent/guardian)
- Presentation of school's position
- Opportunity for student to ask questions, clarify issues brought forth by school and/or board members
- Presentation of student's position
- Opportunity for school and/or board members to ask questions, clarify issues brought forth by student
- Final statements by school, student, and board members

The board will deliberate on the evidence and determine the outcome. The board shall make its determination solely upon evidence presented during the hearing. In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the vote on the Board's decision will take place in open session.

5. The Board of Education shall make a written report to concerned parties within five (5) school days containing the findings and the decision concerning expulsion. (Michigan law does provide for possible reinstatement and enrollment in alternative education programs and strict discipline academies.)

6. A record shall be kept of the Board of Education hearing in accordance with the Open Meetings Act; however, in accordance with Michigan law, student name(s) and student personal representatives will not appear in the official minutes of the meeting.

## MISCELLANEOUS PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are important to every child and many like to celebrate this special day with their classmates. Birthday celebrations at Okemos Public School Elementaries will be done in the classroom by the teachers and classmates. Please do not send any birthday treats (edible or inedible) to share with classmates. We appreciate your cooperation as we work to make birthdays equitable and enjoyable for all students.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are an extension of learning for students. Parent/guardian permission is required for students to participate. To help offset the costs for such experiences, parents may be asked to pay a trip fee. A confidential call to the School Social Worker or Principal is requested if families need assistance with field trip costs. We always welcome donations to help assist families in need.

When misconduct or a pattern of inappropriate behavior exists, students may be denied the privilege of a field trip or a parent may be required to accompany their child.

End of the year activities and trips are a privilege for students who exhibit appropriate behavior during the year. (Good attendance, academic effort, positive behavior).

For students that require the administration of medication during a field trip (local or international travel), and do not already have a Medication Authorization Form filed with the school, one must be completed and medication must be provided in order for the student to attend the trip.

### **Sunscreen and Bug Spray Policy**

To ensure the health and comfort of our students during outdoor activities, we allow the use of sunscreen and bug spray. We recommend that students self-apply these products to promote independence and proper personal care.

For the use of sunscreen and bug spray at school, a completed prescription form must be submitted to the school office. This form should be filled out and signed by a parent/guardian.

In special situations where a student is unable to apply sunscreen or bug spray arrangements can be made for assistance. Please contact the school nurse or administration to discuss and accommodate these individual needs.

## **Teacher Professional Development**

The Board of Education grants elementary teachers time each school year to evaluate current programs, improve instructional techniques and complete record keeping. All of these activities enhance the daily programs and services provided to students. Parents/Guardians will be notified of such inservice periods well in advance through school newsletters. Lunches are canceled and bus transportation schedules are adjusted on half days. Many of the school district's improvements have been planned or introduced through in-service programs.

## **Universal Accommodations**

Okemos Elementaries offers the following Universal Accommodations to EVERY student:

- Students will coordinate with their teachers for extended time for assignments until the end of the unit without penalty.
- All students are provided extended time to finish assessments.
- Students will receive frequent check-ins to determine understanding of directions and content.
- Students will collaborate with teachers to structure a break if needed.
- Students will have access to a seating choice that meets their needs to maximize learning.
- Students will have access to a support that will help them prepare for an assessment (e.g., study guides, class notes, rubric with success criteria, etc).
- Students' larger and long term assignments/projects will be broken down into chunks.
- Students will receive directions for assignments/assessments in multiple modes (written, verbal, etc).
- Students will be able to use a multiplication chart when calculation is not being assessed.
- Students will be able to use non-distracting sensory strategies (wiggle cushion, fidgets, etc) when first discussed with teacher.

## WEB ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Okemos Public Schools (OPS) recognizes the importance of making digital information provided on the District's website accessible to students, prospective students, parents/guardians, employees, guests and visitors with disabilities, particularly those with visual, hearing or manual impairments or who otherwise require the use of assistive technology to access information.

This website is coded to comply with both the Americans With Disabilities Act and conforms level AA of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Users who wish to view these specifications can do so at: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. These guidelines explain how to make web content more accessible and the District is working to educate staff so that the content they may post on their classroom websites will be compliant with the guidelines and be accessible to all visitors.

Okemos Public Schools strives to adhere to the accepted guidelines and standards for accessibility and usability as comprehensively as possible on this website.

If you cannot fully access the information on the District's website, please communicate specific issues with the District's Web Accessibility Coordinator. We will make every effort to provide the information to you in an alternate format and/or make the necessary improvements to ensure the information is accessible.

Formal complaints regarding accessibility concerns may be filed through our Section 504 and Title II grievance procedure. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries and/or complaints regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

<b>Section 504 and Title II Coordinator (adults)</b>	<b>Title IX Coordinator</b>
Mr. John Hood, Superintendent Okemos Public Schools 4406 Okemos Rd. Okemos, MI 48864 517-706-5007 <a href="mailto:john.hood@okemosk12.net">john.hood@okemosk12.net</a>	Mr. Mario Martinez, Director of Human Resources Okemos Public Schools 4406 Okemos Rd. Okemos, MI 48864 517-706-5006 <a href="mailto:mario.martinez@okemosk12.net">mario.martinez@okemosk12.net</a>
<b>Section 504 and Title II Coordinator (students)</b>	<b>Web Accessibility Coordinator</b>

<p>Heather Pricco, Director Special Education Department Okemos Public Schools 4406 Okemos Rd. Okemos, MI 48864 517-706-4829 <a href="mailto:heather.pricco@okemosk12.net">heather.pricco@okemosk12.net</a></p>	<p>Mikayla Temple Department of Technology Okemos Public Schools 4406 Okemos Rd. Okemos, MI 48864 517-706-5041 <a href="mailto:mikayla.temple@okemosk12.net">mikayla.temple@okemosk12.net</a></p>
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## TECHNOLOGY

### **Personal Learning Devices**

The district-provided Personal Learning Devices are a critical component of the classroom instruction. Use of the devices both in school and at home will be based on teacher discretion. In the event of damage to the device not covered by the warranty, the student and parent/legal guardian may be billed for the damages. The administration has the authority to waive or modify charges if the cause of damage is judged to be beyond the student's control. This equipment is, and all times remains, the Property of OPS and is herewith lent to the student for educational purposes only for the academic school year. Inappropriate use of the device may result in the student losing their right to use the device and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **Screen Time/Technology Use**

Okemos Public Schools provides students with meaningful and innovative learning opportunities, which includes the integration of technology into the classroom environment and district provided "one to one" devices as tools to support learning.

Students in grades 5-12 should turn off and charge computers outside of school hours in preparation for the next school day.

Families should be aware that students will access school technology during school hours, with older (secondary) students having more use than younger (elementary) students. We encourage families to visit the National Sleep Foundation for information on screen time use and impacts on student sleep after hours.

Additionally, as a district we are committed to the Health and Safety of all of our students. As part of our commitment we have a Securly Filter on all our students school issued devices. Securly is a K-12 filtering tool that prevents students from accessing inappropriate or distracting content on the web. It also provides data for administrators to see what content students are accessing over time and alerts on concerning search terms, such as those referencing weapons, grief, self-harm, and sexual content. Coupled with the school-based filter, Securly Home provides families with a report of what sites their child is on or topics they may be searching.

## **Securly Device Management Use**

At Okemos Public School, we are committed to fostering a safe and secure digital environment for all students and staff. As part of our efforts to ensure responsible and appropriate use of technology, we utilize Securly Device Management to manage and monitor school-issued devices.

### **Purpose:**

Securly Device Management is employed to:

1. Ensure compliance with school policies and procedures regarding technology use.
2. Safeguard the integrity and security of school-issued devices.
3. Monitor and manage internet usage to promote a productive and educational environment.
4. Protect students from accessing inappropriate or harmful online content.

### **User Responsibilities:**

Students and staff using school-issued devices are expected to:

1. Use the devices in accordance with school policies and guidelines.
2. Respect the integrity of the devices and refrain from tampering with or attempting to bypass security measures.
3. Report any issues or concerns regarding device functionality or security to the appropriate school personnel.
4. Understand that internet activity on school devices may be monitored and logged for security and accountability purposes.

### **Consequences of Misuse:**

Misuse of school-issued devices or attempts to circumvent Securly Device Management may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to:

1. Loss of device privileges.
2. Suspension or revocation of technology access.
3. Academic penalties.
4. Legal consequences for severe breaches of security or illegal activity.



By using school-issued devices, students and staff acknowledge their understanding of and agreement to abide by the terms outlined in this handbook section.

Board Policy:

[3116 District Technology and Acceptable Use](#)

[5208 Student Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy](#)

### **Acceptable Use Policy of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The following guidelines, in alignment with Board of Education policies for code of conduct, outline the acceptable use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and technologies by students. Violations of these guidelines may be subject to disciplinary action.

1. **Academic Integrity** - AI is not a substitute for schoolwork that requires original thought. Students may not claim AI generated content as their own work. Students are expected to give credit to the source or acknowledge the AI tool they used to generate content, similar to how they would cite a source in a traditional research paper or project.
2. **Class Use** - The use of AI to take tests, complete assignments, create multimedia projects, write papers, or complete schoolwork must align with the teacher's assignment guidelines and/or class syllabus for using AI. If a student is unsure about expectations for appropriate use, communication with the teacher should occur.
3. **Bullying & Harassment** - Do not use AI to engage in any form of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or other behavior that may be harmful to others. Examples include, but are not limited to, modification of images, video, audio, or text.
4. **Bias & Inaccuracy** - AI results may generate inaccurate or biased results. It is the student's responsibility to check results for relevance and accuracy.
5. **Privacy** - Students are expected to protect the privacy and security of personal information.
6. **Policy Statement: Responsible Use of AI:** Users must use AI technologies in a responsible and ethical manner, respecting the rights and privacy of individuals and ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
7. **Data Privacy and Security:** Users must protect the privacy and security of personal and confidential data when using AI tools. It is important to ensure that any data collected or processed by AI technologies are securely stored, transmitted, and used in accordance with relevant data protection laws and district policies.

8. **Bias and Fairness:** Users must be aware of the potential biases that can exist within AI technologies and take measures to minimize their impact. When using AI tools for decision-making processes, users must ensure fairness and equity, considering the potential implications for diverse student populations.
9. **Transparency and Explainability:** Users must prioritize the transparency and explainability of AI systems, particularly when they have a significant impact on students or staff. Clear explanations should be provided to help users understand how AI technologies operate and the reasoning behind their outcomes.
10. **Ethical Considerations:** Users must consider the ethical implications of AI technologies, including issues related to privacy, consent, dignity, and the well-being of individuals. It is important to foster a culture that encourages thoughtful discussions and critical thinking around the ethical dimensions of AI.
11. **Educational Purpose:** The use of AI technologies should align with the district's educational goals and objectives. Users should prioritize educational outcomes, personalized learning, and pedagogical effectiveness when integrating AI tools into instructional practices.
12. **Professional Development:** Users should receive ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of AI technologies and their effective integration into teaching and administrative practices. These opportunities should address topics such as AI ethics, bias mitigation, and effective instructional strategies.
13. **Compliance with Existing Policies:** The use of AI technologies must comply with all existing district policies, including but not limited to the AUP, data privacy policies, and student code of conduct. Users are responsible for familiarizing themselves with these policies and ensuring compliance.




By incorporating this AI addendum into the existing AUP, the school district aims to provide a framework that promotes the responsible and ethical use of AI technologies. This addendum seeks to balance the benefits of AI integration with the safeguarding of student privacy, fairness, and transparency. It is essential for all users to understand and adhere to these guidelines to create a safe, inclusive, and responsible AI-enabled learning environment.

### **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (A.I.)**

In order to help students to acquire new knowledge and skills, as well as to build their knowledge and skills progressively over time, teachers must have access to students' authentic displays of learning. Sometimes, those skills can be ethically and productively enhanced in very positive ways using generative AI, and at other times, teachers will prefer

that students complete assignments without using generative AI. This will likely depend upon the skills/knowledge being assessed.

Therefore, these levels may be used by teachers to communicate their expectations for students' use of AI to complete various creative assignments both in and out of the classroom.

		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AI RECOMMENDED</b></p> <p>Generative AI is recommended for use in completing this assignment or project. Students are encouraged to explore AI tools and techniques to enhance their work. Properly cite any AI-generated work products.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AI PERMITTED</b></p> <p>Generative AI is permitted but not required for completing this assignment or project. Students can choose to use AI tools and techniques if they believe it will improve their work. Properly cite any AI-generated work products.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AI RESTRICTED</b></p> <p>Generative AI use in completing this assignment or project is restricted. Students are expected to complete the work using only their own knowledge and skills.</p>

**Electronic Equipment**

Out of respect for our instructional day, communication-enabled watches/devices must be turned off and not used during the school day. Cell phones must remain "off" and stored (in locker/backpack) during school hours. Personal gaming devices, music players, etc. are not permitted at school unless approved in advance by the teacher/administrator for a specific purpose. The district is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones or electronics. Also, laser pointers are not permitted on school property.

## FREQUENTLY REFERENCED DISTRICT POLICIES

### **Civil Defense**

Civil Defense is an important phase of today's educational program. Considering the number of children as well as adults in our educational institutions, it has become necessary to set up some uniform procedures to be used as guidelines in case of a disaster.

Through the efforts of principals and their staff, each building has a well-defined plan to cover natural and man-made disasters. Tornado drills, fire drills and "lock down" drills are conducted each year to ensure the safety of pupils as outlined in board policy [3402 Drills, Plans, and Reports](#).

### **Protective Service Referrals**

If school personnel suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, they are required by law to make a referral to protective services.

### **Smoke-free**

All buildings and grounds of the Okemos Public Schools are designated as smoke-free by the Board of Education.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Okemos Public Schools and the State Board of Education comply with all Federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination and with all requirements and regulations of the United States Department of Education. It is the policy of these governmental agencies that no person on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, height, weight, color, religion, political affiliation, national origin or ancestry, age, sex, marital status, veteran status or disability (handicap) shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any programs or activity for which it is responsible or for which it receives financial assistance from the United States Department of Education.

If any person believes that the Okemos Public Schools, or any part of the school organization, has inadequately applied the principles and/or regulations of Title VI (prohibits discrimination based on race), Title IX (prohibits discrimination based on sex), or Section 504 (prohibits discrimination based on handicap), your child may bring forward a complaint to the Local Title IX and/or Section 504 Coordinator at the following addresses:

Title IX Coordinator:

Mr. Mario Martinez

Okemos Public Schools 4406 N. Okemos Road Okemos, MI 48864

Phone 517-706-5006

504 Coordinator:

Ms. Amanda Hall

Kinawa 5/6 School

1900 Kinawa Dr. Okemos, MI 48864

Phone 517-706-4811

**Sexual harassment** is unlawful under both Michigan and Federal laws and is contrary to the commitment of this district to provide an effective learning environment "Sexual Harassment" is defined as

1. Unwelcome sexual advances; or
2. Unwelcome requests for sexual favors; or
3. Intimidating, hostile or offensive verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

The district policy prohibits sexual harassment of students, employees, board members, volunteers, contractors or applicants for employment by students, employees, board members, volunteers or contractors.

Copies of the policy are available from the Office of the Superintendent, 4406 N. Okemos Road, Okemos, Michigan 48864; telephone 517-706-5002

**Distribution or Sale of Material on School Property**

No materials are to be sold on school grounds without the approval of the school administrator. Selling of items is usually limited to school sponsored groups or activities.

**Special Education Services and Guidelines**

Okemos Public Schools provides a full continuum of programming for special education students ages 3 through 26. We also provide services for children ages 0 through 3 through the Early On program provided at the Ingham Intermediate School District. We service over 400 students each year in our various special education programs.

The special education staff includes resource teachers who service all buildings, speech pathologists, social workers, school psychologists and special education programs for early

childhood, behavior and learning. All of these programs operate under state and federal guidelines for special education.

If any parent/guardian has a question regarding special education or suspects their child has a disability, please call the special education office at 706-4829, any building administrator, or go to the Okemos website and click on Special Education.

### **Student Education Records**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over eighteen years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights include:

1. Parents and eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records and to have the district respond to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records.
2. Parents or eligible students should submit to the appropriate administrator a written request that identifies as precisely as possible the record(s) they wish to inspect or review, or receive explanation or interpretation. The building administrator will make the necessary arrangements within 15 school days following receipt of the request. All records must be examined in the school district office during the business day in the presence of the appropriate administrator or designee.
3. Parents and eligible students have the right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the student's privacy or other rights.
4. The parent or eligible student should submit to the appropriate administrator a written request, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading, within 10 school days from the date the records were examined.
5. In the event the district decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the district shall notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their rights to a hearing regarding their request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
6. Parents and eligible students have the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
7. One exception, which permits disclosures without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests or as provided by statute or regulation. A

school official is a person employed by the District as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the District has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

8. A school official has a "legitimate educational interest" if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility.
9. The following information contained in a student's education records is designated as "directory information" and may be disclosed without the parents'/guardians' or eligible student's prior written consent (Okemos Board Policy 5125).

- A. Student Name
- B. Names of Student's Parents or Guardians
- C. Address
- D. Telephone Numbers
- E. Birth Dates
- F. Class Designation (e.g., 1st grade, 10th grade, etc.)
- G. Dates of Attendance
- H. Extra-curricular Participation
- I. Achievement Awards or Honors (not specific course grades)
- J. Weight and Height if a member of an athletic team
- K. Photograph, Newspaper, TV, Videotape
- L. School or School District Previously Attended
- M. Parent/Guardian Email

Parents/guardians or eligible students will have two weeks from the first day of school, or within two weeks of enrollment if enrolled after school begins, to advise the principal in writing of any or all of the items they refuse to permit the district to designate as directory information.

10. Parents and eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning an alleged failure by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. Such a complaint should be filed with the U.S. Department of Education at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-4605

A copy of the District's student record policy and implementing regulations are available in each school building or superintendent's office. For more information concerning this notice of the District's policy, please contact the Superintendent's office at 517-706-5010.

### **Secure Storage Law**

One of the District's top priorities is to provide students and staff with a safe educational environment, which includes an environment free from gun violence.

Public Act 17 of 2023 amended the Firearms Act by adding MCL 28.429 which went into effect on February 13, 2024. It is a crime to improperly store or leave a firearm unattended at one's home when that individual knows or reasonably should know a minor is, or is likely to be, on the premises. Any unattended firearms must be unloaded and locked with a locking device or stored in a locked box or container.

If a student ever feels unsafe or has a concern regarding school safety, they are encouraged to report it immediately to any District employee or through the OK2SAY program.

### **Bad Weather or Emergency Closing**

The Okemos Public Schools is prepared to use one of four plans.

1. The complete closing of schools for the day.
2. Keeping schools open without bus transportation.
3. A delay in the running of busses and the opening of schools.
4. Early or late dismissal.

The selected plan will be called into area radio and television stations. A message from the Superintendent will also be sent to parents/guardians through a recorded phone message through Bright Arrow and posted on the district website. If you are receiving a school issued message from BrightArrow, please be aware that the message will start as soon as you say "hello". Should the system detect any background noise during the call session, it will pause and restart from the beginning. To prevent this from happening, you can put your phone on mute or cover the microphone. At any time, you can restart the message by pressing the Star key.