



# GREAT SENECA CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2011-2012

## PARENT HANDBOOK Policies, Practices, and Procedures

### School Hours

Office Hours	8:00am-4:15pm	School Day	8:50am-3:05pm
Teachers	8:00am-3:30pm	Early Dismissal	12:35pm

### For Your Calendar

Wednesday, August 24	Kindergarten Parent Informational Meeting, 7:00pm
Thursday, August 25	GSCES Open House, 12:30-2:00pm
Monday, August 29	FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
Wednesday, August 31	GSCES-PTA Back-to-School Picnic, 6:30pm
Friday, September 3	Summer Reading/Math Packets Due
Monday, September 5	Labor Day (Holiday-No School)
Monday, September 12	Back-To-School Night, Gr. 1-2, 7pm
Tuesday, September 13	Back-To-School Night, Gr. 3-5, 7pm
Wednesday, September 28	Early Release – Students dismissed at 12:30 pm
Thursday, September 29	No School- Rosh Hashanah-Holiday

### SCHOOL HOURS

The instructional school day runs from **8:50am-3:05pm** for grades K-5. All students are expected to arrive at school on time, but no earlier than 8:30am. **Students are considered tardy if they are not present in their classrooms by 8:50am.** Students eating breakfast at school may enter at 8:15am. School office hours are 8:00am – 4:15pm.

### TRAFFIC SAFETY: CAR-RIDERS / WALKERS

Please obey the “No Parking” signs in the bus lane, handicapped spaces and reserved spaces at the side parking lot. Parents are encouraged to drop their children off in the **Kiss-N-Ride** area without exiting their vehicles. School Safety Patrols and adult supervision will be present to assist students from their vehicles to the school building. Dropping your child off at the curb of area roads is unsafe and not permitted. Maintaining a consistent traffic flow is very important. Signs are posted to mark the beginning and ending points for cars to drop-off. Please do not leave cars unattended along the curb in front of the school. Parking is prohibited on the school-side of Dairymaid Drive, but cars are permitted to park on the far side of Dairymaid Drive, facing up the hill. Please be sure to follow all local parking signs and avoid parking in private residential areas. The school is not responsible for any parking fees, tickets, or tows.

If your child is a walker, be sure to see that she/he is walking straight to school without delay and help us emphasize the importance of 'purpose' to their walking. If you drive your child, be sure to give yourself time to travel from home safely, considering the weather elements, rainy-day traffic delays, and other aspects that can delay your trip. The Dairymaid/Mateny area becomes more congested during inclement weather. Plan for this and continue to demonstrate patience with your bullfrog neighbors. We want all of our students to arrive on-time and safely. Remember, students must be in their classrooms by 8:50 A.M. so you must give them time to get from your car, through the school, to their lockers, and into the classroom, prepared for the day ahead. Thank you for your help with this. It is very important.

### **SAFETY CROSSING GUARDS**

Adult crossing guards are located at the intersection of Dairymaid Drive/Metz Drive and at the intersection of Dairymaid Drive/Mateny Road to ensure the safety of pedestrians during the school's arrival and dismissal process. It is state law to obey the commands of all official county crossing guards.

### **ABSENCES**

Daily, consistent attendance at school equates with school success. We urge students and parents to make school a priority and to schedule vacations around the school calendar.

In accordance with the Maryland School Performance Program:

- Students will be recorded as *a.m. absent*, if they arrive at school more than two hours late.
- Students will be recorded as *p.m. absent*, if they leave school more than two hours early.
- Students will be recorded as either *a.m. absent or p.m. absent*, if they are absent from school for more than two hours, but less than four hours during the school day.
- Students will be recorded as *full-day absent*, if they are present for less than two hours of the school day.
- Students will be recorded as *full-day present*, if they are present for more than four hours of the school day.

If your child will be absent, please call the School Office as soon after 8:00 am as possible. If you suspect your child has a communicable disease, please note that at the time of your call. The school will attempt to verify the apparent absence of any student whose parents have not called.

Dated notes, stating the specific reasons for absences, signed by a parent or guardian, are required no later than one day following an absence. Excused absences from school include: illness, doctor or dentist appointment, death in the immediate family, observance of a religious holiday, or a court order.

### **EARLY DEPARTURE**

Children who need to leave school during the day must bring a written excuse to school in the morning for approval. The parent must sign the child out when they leave school, and sign-in when they return to school. *Please understand that students will not be called to depart their classroom instruction until the parent has arrived in the school's office and has requested the child.* Instructional time is often lost when students are waiting in the office for parents to arrive.

Your cooperation with this is very important. **Students will not be called to be dismissed from class after 2:45 p.m. They will be dismissed with the rest of the students at 3:05 p.m. If you need to pick up your child for an appointment, you will need to do so prior to 2:45 p.m. This will decrease the amount of disruptions to our classrooms and help all students focus during this important time of the school day. In addition, please be sure you make decisions regarding after-school plans before the start of the school day (and articulate these plans to your child at that time), as calls about changes in after-school plans are disruptive, as well.**

**LATE ARRIVAL**

Children who arrive late to school are **expected** to have a parent sign them in at the office. Students should also have a **written excuse** for tardiness, signed by their parent or legal guardian.

**LUNCH/RECESS**

The lunch/recess period is one hour. Menus are sent home on the first day of each month and can be found on the school's website. Hot lunches are served daily with alternate choices. Lunch is **\$2.50** including milk. Milk may be purchased separately for **\$.60**. Breakfast may be purchased, beginning at **8:15am**, in the cafeteria for **\$1.30**. Parents are highly encouraged to start a SNAP (computerized cash register system) account for their child. This will eliminate lost or forgotten lunch money. The price of lunch or a snack will be subtracted from the account. Low-balance letters will be sent home once a week, from the cafeteria manager, when a child's account is lower than \$20.00. Cheese sandwiches will be offered to children who have forgotten a lunch or have exhausted funds from their SNAP account. **The maximum negative amount allowed on a SNAP account is \$10.00. Once this negative balance is reached, students will receive cheese sandwiches instead of a meal.** Money deposited on the student's account by the parent/adult will be applied to the negative balance. Free or reduced lunches are available to eligible students. Guidelines and application forms will be sent home the first week of school.

School policy states that students will go outside for recess when it is **32 degrees** or warmer. (Wind chill temperatures may be factored into decisions made.) You should make sure your child comes to school with appropriate winter clothing, hats and gloves, etc., as they will be going outside for recess on most days.

**2011-2012 LUNCH RECESS SCHEDULE**

	LUNCH PERIODS		EARLY RELEASE	DELAYED OPEN
	Lunch	Recess	Lunch	Lunch
10:50-11:20	3	n/a	10:35 5	11:10 3
11:20-11:50	1	3	10:50 K	11:30 2
11:50-12:20	5	1	11:05 3	11:50 1
12:20-12:50	4	5	11:20 4	12:10 5
12:50-1:20	K	4&2	11:35 1	12:30 K
1:20-1:50	2	K	11:50 2	12:50 4

## **LOCKERS**

Students in grades 1-5 will be assigned individual lockers outside their classrooms. These lockers are designed for coat and backpack storage. Please do **not** purchase locks for these lockers, as this will not be permitted.

## **VISITING CLASSROOMS**

Parents are permitted to visit the school and may observe their children's classrooms. Please arrange a visit ahead of time by calling your child's teacher, or administration beforehand, since the class may be having a test or be out on a field trip. As you enter the building, **you must report to the main office to sign in on the laptop computer to receive an identification badge/visitor sticker.**

While visiting, please remember that an observation visit is not the time to talk to teachers. If you wish to discuss a matter with your child's teacher, make a separate conference date. Parent comments are encouraged and valued. Parents are asked to take into account when visiting that much precedes and follows the segment of the day observed.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled on an appointment basis in November. These conferences provide a planned opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss a child's achievement and to plan cooperatively for continued student progress. Parent-teacher conferences will be held on November 10 and 11, 2011.

## **LOST & FOUND**

Found articles of clothing, hats, gloves, lunch boxes, and other items are stored and periodically displayed in our All-Purpose room. Children should check the lost and found for missing possessions. **PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING.** Clothing not claimed is donated to local charities.

## **CELL PHONES**

Cell phones are not permitted to be used by students at Great Seneca Creek ES during the school day. Students may possess cell phone, (for walking to/from school or other specific reasons, etc.) but all phones must be turned "off" and stored in the backpack at all times and not on the person. Students who are found/caught using or in possession of a cell phone during the school hours will need to hand the device to school administration. Parents will be expected to retrieve the phone in person.

## **STUDENT DRESS CODE**

All clothing worn on school property should reflect the fact that school is a respectable place where students and adults do important work. Clothing worn at school should not cause disruption, nor endanger health or safety. Guidelines are as follows:

- Short shorts, short skirts, halter-tops, crop tops, muscle shirts, spaghetti straps should not be worn to school.
- Flip-flop sandals are not permitted to be worn in the building or on the playground. (Secured sandals are not considered flip-flops.)

- Bandanas, hoods, hats, scarves, sweatbands, knitted hats, or other head coverings are not allowed except as part of religious observances.
- Roller Shoes “Heelys” are not permitted to be worn on or around school property at any time. *The shoes, however, may be worn if the wheels have been removed.*
- T-Shirts with inappropriate messages are not to be worn to school.
- Moderation and good taste are always advised when evaluating what is appropriate for the school setting.
- The school principal, or assigned designee, makes final judgment regarding individual dress code issues.

### **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING**

In case of emergencies, which make it impossible for Montgomery County Public Schools to open, information will be broadcast over local radio and television stations, beginning at 6:00 a.m. Please listen to local news and weather stations for updates or log on to: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/> Please do not call the school. Sign up for MCPS Quick notes at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/quicknotes/> to received instant email notices regarding school closing and delayed openings.

### **EMERGENCY DELAYED OPENING**

In the event of snow or other hazardous weather conditions, school may open one to two hours later than usual to assure bus safety. All students who normally ride school buses will be picked-up one or two hours later than their regularly scheduled pick-up time on delayed opening days. Sign up for MCPS Quick notes at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/quicknotes/> to received instant email notices regarding school closing and delayed openings.

### **EMERGENCY DISMISSAL**

When early dismissal of students is necessary due to inclement weather, schools will close 2 1/2 hours early (12:35pm). Buses may run late because of hazardous road conditions. The lunch period will be scheduled for students prior to dismissal. Announcements will be made on local radio and television stations. Parents are urged to tune in to local news stations, email, and the school’s website to find out about school closings.

In the event of an early closing, it is essential that children know what they are to do and where they are to go. Parents should give children specific instructions, which should also be on file at the school. If changes are made in these instructions, the school should be notified. In case of the need for emergency pick-up, students will **only** be released to parents or to the person designated by the parent as written and signed on the appropriate emergency forms. This may happen only after an emergency code has been lifted. Valid I.D. is necessary for students to be released from the building during these conditions.

### **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Teachers and students will be called to the telephone only for emergencies. ***Students will not be permitted to use the hallway phone during the instructional day.***

### **LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER**

Library services, under the direction of a full-time library media specialist and assistant, are available to all students during the regular school hours. At the beginning of the year, students in grades K-5 may check out 2 books at a time for a period of up to two weeks. Once library routines and expectations have been established, children are encouraged to check out the number of books that meet their individual reading needs. Students who demonstrate responsibility will have unlimited check out. We encourage students to check out books **often**. The best time of day for students to check out books is in the morning before class begins and at the end of the day. Students may also visit the library throughout the school day with permission from their teacher. We encourage parents to volunteer in the media center to help us keep the books organized and available to the voracious readers at Great Seneca Creek Elementary.

### **REPORT CARDS**

Standard report cards will be issued four times during the school year: November 10 & 11, 2011 (parent conferences), February 1, April 12, and June 21(mailed). Kindergarten report cards will be issued in January and June.

### **CORRESPONDENCE “24 RULE”**

The staff have agreed to guidelines that include a 24-hour turn-around rule for parent communication. This includes email, letters, phone calls, etc. Parents should understand that staff are extremely busy and may not be able to answer or address all concerns and needs in a moment’s notice. Some form of a response can be expected by parents within 24 hours of initial contact.

### **CLASS PARTIES / BIRTHDAYS**

Class parties are an important part of child development and will be recognized in this way. All classrooms will conduct Halloween, Valentine’s Day, and “End-of-The Year” celebrations. Additional celebrations will be at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Parent volunteers should honor the expectations that classroom celebrations should not be prepared for any earlier than 1 hour prior to the event. **Student birthdays will be announced school-wide during the Morning Announcements and students will be invited to visit the office to receive a Bullfrog Birthday Pencil.** Individual student birthdays may be briefly honored in the classroom at the end of the school day, with communication between teacher and parent prior to the celebration. These celebrations should be kept to 10 minutes or less in order to maximize instructional time.

**Allergy Policy:** All food for parties/celebrations must be store-bought, including original label. In addition, all foods for classroom celebrations (where applicable) must be “peanut-free” (“peanut-oil free”) and approved by the classroom teacher prior to the celebration. It can be very difficult to determine such ingredients in foods. Please be sure treats and snacks for class parties are pre-approved by the classroom teacher, who has direct knowledge of the severity of health issues in his/her classroom.

When planning for pizza parties, consider *The Rustic Oven, Dominos Pizza, Pizza Palace, and/or Vocelli’s Pizza* when ordering. We have checked with these companies and they have declared themselves free of such allergens in their pizza ingredients. (It is always a good idea to remind the vendors of our concerns when placing the order to ensure they are taking extra precautions to keep our students safe.)

## **CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR SCHOOL EVACUATION**

In the event of an emergency evacuation of the school for a sustained period of time, students will walk with their teachers to the Clopper's Mill Shopping Center parking lot on Mateny Road. This constitutes a portion of our contingency plan for unusual circumstances far beyond the usual and routine fire drill procedures.

## **BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE & PRE-SCHOOL**

Before/After School Child Care is available on-site for our students from Bar-T, Inc., a privately funding child services company. For more information and fees, call the Bar-T office at (301) 948-3172. Information can also be obtained from the school's website.

## **ILLNESS/MEDICATIONS**

A child who is ill is routinely sent to the Health Room. The school nurse or school health technician will assess the child, contact the parent or guardian, and send the child home if necessary. Any child with an elevated temperature of 100 degrees or above is sent home. **School policy states that your child must be free from fever for 24 hours before returning to school.**

It is likely that some time during the school year your child will have a medication prescribed for the treatment of a health problem. As a general policy, the school recommends that children receive medication at home whenever possible. In the event your physician decides your child needs to receive medication during the school day, certain procedures must be followed. **For more information contact our School Nurse directly, or the school health technician, at (301) 353-8826.**

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

In the event that your physician decides that your child needs to receive medication at school during the school day, MCPS Form 525-13, Authorization to Administer Prescribed Medication, must be completed and on file. Forms are available in the School Office and in the Health Room.

If you do not have access to the proper form, a written order on the physician's stationery or prescription pad is acceptable, provided it includes the following information:

- a. Your child's name
- b. Name of medication being ordered
- c. Dosage
- d. Time of administration
- e. Possible side effects

The first full day's dosage of any new prescription must be administered at home. Medication must be brought to the school by the parent or guardian. Under no circumstances will medication be given which is brought to school by a student. Medication must be properly labelled by a pharmacist. Over-the-counter medication, e.g., aspirin, must also be prescribed by a physician as noted above and brought to the school by the parent or guardian in the original unopened container with the dosage labelled by the manufacturer.

## **BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE**

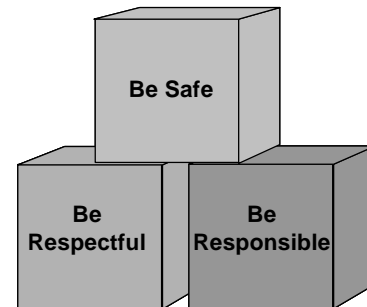
Children are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner that they and their classmates will gain the most from their school experience. School provides many opportunities for children to develop respect for others and the ability to work, learn, and live together in harmony. Students are expected to be respectful, responsible, and safe at all times in the school building.

Great Seneca Creek Elementary School seeks to create a learning community where we work together to create a respectful, responsible, and safe environment:

### ✓ **Be Respectful**

Students will:

- Respect everyone's right to learn.
- Speak and act in a kind and courteous way to other children and adults.
- Peacefully resolve conflicts by talking and listening to the other person.
- Follow the instructions of supervising adults.



### ✓ **Be Responsible**

Students will:

- Be prepared to learn by coming to school on time with all of the appropriate materials.
- Respect and take care of school and private property.
- Manage their time at school in a way that facilitates learning.
- Follow established guidelines and routines.

### ✓ **Be Safe**

Students will:

- Play in a safe way and use good judgment.
- Consider the health or safety of oneself and others.
- Follow school rules on the playground, in the classroom, and in all parts of the school.
- Use equipment appropriately.

## **POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS SYSTEM (PBIS)**

The staff at Great Seneca Creek Elementary believes that students perform at high levels (both academic and behavioral) when their learning occurs in a safe, respectful, energetic, and rigorous school environment. In order to enhance our efforts to create and sustain such an environment, GSCES is implementing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) System. PBIS facilitates an organized system of positive behavior management in all settings throughout the school. The core components of this system's approach include:

- ✓ **Providing school-wide structures to explicitly define, teach and communicate the three positive behavior expectations: *Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible***

- ✓ **Enhancing our behavioral recognition system for all students who meet school and classroom expectations**
- ✓ **Developing leadership skills in students by providing authentic experiences to serve the school community**
- ✓ **Facilitating an organized system of disciplinary actions.**
- ✓ **Managing and using data to drive decisions regarding the effectiveness of the behavior management processes**

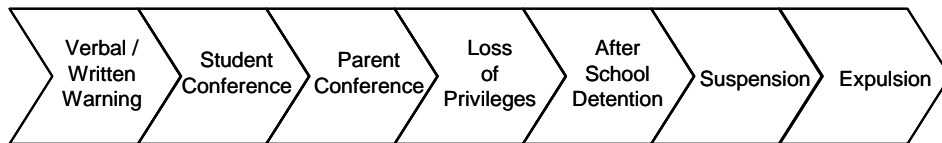
The GSCES community sets high standards for students to conduct themselves in a way that is conducive to building a climate essential for learning. When behavioral expectations are met; students have an opportunity to be recognized for their efforts through a variety of classroom and school-wide incentives. When classroom and school-wide behavior expectations are not met, specific consequences are given.

Combining high academic expectations with a positive systems approach to behavior allows all students the opportunity to experience high levels of success. When students experience success, they build resiliency, persistence, and self-esteem. All of which results in a school atmosphere that promotes excellence for all.

### Consequences

Students may face disciplinary actions as a consequence of any behavior that disrupts classes, causes disorder, invades the rights of others, or is unsafe or violates a school rule or disciplinary code. Discipline will be fair and appropriate and not designed to embarrass students.

The diagram below shows the general progression of consequences from minimum to maximum.



The entry point on the chart (e.g., begin with verbal warning or begin with parent conference) depends on the circumstances of the incident. Disciplinary actions will begin with a discussion with the student. The discussion will include:

- Oral or written notice of the infraction
- An explanation of the evidence
- A chance for the student to tell their side of the story
- An explanation of the consequence

### **SCHOOL SAFETY PATROLS**

Our fifth grade students will have the responsibility of school safety patrols. They go on duty at 8:30am and 3:05pm. Mr. Terry Dorfman, Physical Education Teacher, is our patrol sponsor. For the safety of all students, parents should impress upon their children the importance of following patrol instructions.

### **SAFETY: BUSES**

At the elementary level, parents are responsible for student safety at bus stops (school safety patrols assist). Students who wish to go home with a classmate after school (either by car or riding a different bus) **must** bring a note to the office in the morning for verification. **The bus drivers will not allow students on buses without written parent/school permission.** Teachers must sign the bus notes before child is to go home on a different bus.

**For problems concerning bus routes and stop locations, call Ms. Kathy Herald,  
Transportation Cluster Manager at (301) 601-0331.**

### **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

Parents may obtain a school supply list for their child's grade level by visiting the main office or logging onto the school's website. Purchasing the entire list of supplies is not a requirement. All students will be provided with the necessary supplies if they are unable to obtain the supplies from the list.

### **PEER MEDIATION**

Under the direct guidance of our school counselor, fifth grade students have an opportunity to serve as peer mediators to help fellow students work through conflicts. Those students who are selected as peer mediators receive six hours of training in conflict resolution.

### **HOMEWORK POLICY**

The Montgomery County Public Schools Homework Policy serves as the framework for our school's policy. This policy sets the frequency and time frames for homework. Homework is assigned two to five times per week, depending on the grade level. It is not assigned during designated religious holidays or when important class or school activities are planned. Long-term projects may also exist, in addition to daily assignment expectations. **Parents are asked to closely monitor the homework levels of their children and are responsible for contacting teachers if homework is taking too much time or requires extensive parental assistance on a consistent basis.**

The following are suggested time frames for homework by grade level:

<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>10-15 minutes per night</b>
<b>Grades 1 and 2</b>	<b>15-20 minutes per night</b>
<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>25-45 minutes per night</b>
<b>Grade 4 and 5</b>	<b>30-60 minutes per night</b>

(Please note: These time frames do **not** include the 15-20 minutes per night that each child throughout all grade levels is expected to commit to reading, either independent or from read-alouds.