

McCarthy-Towne School Handbook



Acton, Massachusetts

McCarthy-Towne School
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to McCarthy-Towne School. I hope you will take a few minutes to read this information about our school. I think McCarthy-Towne School is an exciting, challenging and nurturing place for children--one which provides them with a wide variety of educational opportunities. If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please contact me.

McCarthy-Towne School is located in the Parker Damon Building on the Acton Public Schools' main campus. Our address is 11 Charter Road and our telephone number is 978-264-4700 extension 3701. If you would like to learn more about our school, please visit our web site at <http://mct.ab.mec.edu> or contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Marcia FitzGerald
Principal

MCCARTHY-TOWNE PHILOSOPHY	4
Office Forms	5
Emergency Cards	5
Dismissal Cards -	5
Other Office Forms	5
Attendance	5
Truancy and Attendance	5
Student Visitors.....	6
Early Student Arrivals.....	6
Attendance/Safe Arrival.....	6
Tardiness	6
Dismissal.....	6
Request to Leave School Early	6
General Dismissal Procedures	7
Students Remaining After School.....	7
Walkers	7
Bicycles.....	7
Elementary Bus Pass Procedure.....	8
Emergency Dismissal.....	8
School Visitors and Volunteers	9
Parent Involvement	9
School Volunteers:.....	9
Classroom Volunteers:.....	9
Parent Teacher Student Organization (P.T.S.O) Committee Members:.....	9
MCT School Council	9
THE CLASSROOM	10
Parent – Teacher Conferences	10
Homework.....	10
Field Trips.....	11
Field Trip Policy for Children Who Have Insect Bite and/or Allergy Reactions Requiring Emergency Medication	11
Absences Due To Vacation During School Time.....	11
MCAS Testing Program	11
Placement Process.....	12
Policy on Competitions Sponsored by Non-School Organizations	12
Religion and Prayer in School	12
Property and Books.....	13
HEALTH AND SAFETY.....	13
Health Office.....	13
When to Notify the Nurse	13
Protocol Medications	13
Accident and Illness.....	14
Fever	14
Cold, Cough, Sore Throat	14
Stomachache, Vomiting, Diarrhea.....	14
Red Eye.....	15

Pain	15
Rash.....	15
Lice	15
Universal Precautions for the School Setting	15
Physical Screening Examinations	15
School Insurance	16
Animals in the School Building.....	16
Emergency Procedures.....	17
Fire Drills/Alarms	17
Lunch and Milk Programs	17
Clothing.....	18
ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR COMPUTERS, INTERNET,	18
AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY	18
1. Acceptable Use	18
2. Privileges.....	18
3. Etiquette	18
4. Online Safety	19
5. Security	19
6. Vandalism	19
Cellular Telephones	19
BEHAVIOR AT SCHOOL.....	20
McCarthy-Towne Behavior Contract	20
Behaviors Resulting in Serious Consequences	21
Bomb Threats.....	22
Dangerous Weapons	22
Harassment.....	22
Disruption of School.....	22
False Fire Alarms.....	22
Stealing	22
Vandalism	22
See Appendix 10 for Discipline for Special Education Students	22
TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM SCHOOL	23
Student School Bus Behavior Regulations	23
APPENDICES	26
APPENDIX 1 SCHOOL POLICIES AND DISCIPLINE (INCLUDING REGULATIONS ON STUDENT HANDBOOKS, WEAPONS, SMOKING, EXPULSION).....	26
APPENDIX 2 NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION.....	28
APPENDIX 3 SEXUAL HARASSMENT	29
APPENDIX 4 SEX EDUCATION PARENT NOTIFICATION POLICY.....	30
APPENDIX 5 IMMUNIZATION POLICY RELATING TO NEW STUDENTS	31
APPENDIX 6 TRUANCY AND ATTENDANCE PARENT INFORMATION	32
APPENDIX 7 STUDENT RECORDS	34
APPENDIX 8 HOMELESS STUDENTS	35
APPENDIX 9 CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE.....	36
APPENDIX 10 DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS	37

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS NOT YET DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION	38
APPENDIX 11 CHILD STUDY TEAM.....	39
APPENDIX 12 RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS	40
APPENDIX 13 SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES.....	41

MCCARTHY-TOWNE PHILOSOPHY

McCarthy-Towne is a community of learners in which children, teachers, and families work cooperatively to encourage individual growth and success in a changing world. Children are given the responsibility for learning independently, solving problems and making decisions. They are encouraged to take risks, and are acknowledged for their unique talents, skills and ideas.

Teachers and parents are expected to be part of the decision-making process for running the school and exploring new possibilities. They readily try new things and risk failure in order to achieve improvement. They want the school's environment to be welcoming, friendly, and safe in a structure that is informal, yet orderly and clear. The environment is designed to value risk taking, collaboration, persistence, flexibility and trust.

Everyone at MCT is considered both a student and a teacher. Integrated curricula and thematic approaches stress cooperation, active participation, and experimentation. Asking questions is considered as important as giving answers; there may be many correct answers. Students' individual needs, personal strengths and learning styles are always supported. Students and parents may share instructional roles with the teacher and all learn from what occurs.

The following illustrate some significant practices:

- Different types of students' work are displayed everywhere throughout the school. The displays show that students' work, whether in process or completed, is important. This work is displayed so as to be easily viewed and participated in by other students.
- Students exhibit knowledge about, and pride in, the work they are doing.
- Students show that they care about themselves and others.
- Teachers emphasize activities and experiences that promote careful thought processes and problem solving skills.

The Main Office

The Main Office serves as the center for a wide range of important activities. It is the communication link between home and school. If you need to leave a message for any member of the staff, we will connect you to his or her voice mail. The main office number is 978-264-4700 ext. 3701.

Office Forms

Emergency Cards

Two Emergency Cards must be completed for every student at McCarthy-Towne: one for the office and one for the Health Office. Up-to-date information allows the office to contact parents in case of an emergency. Therefore, it is **extremely important** to notify the school immediately if there is a change in address or telephone number(s) at home and/or at work. For similar reasons, we also need current addresses and home numbers of child-care providers and the people to contact in case of an emergency. Please notify the school office whenever there is change in your home, work, or cell phone number.

Dismissal Cards -

The student dismissal card, which is distributed at the start of the school year, will allow us to have quick and accurate reference to where your child is going after school each day. During the course of the year, if there are permanent changes to these arrangements, please let the school office know in writing.

Other Office Forms

At the start of the school year, the following forms are sent home:

- Information release
- Behavior Contract
- CORI (Criminal Offender Release Information) form
- Free and Reduced Lunch
- Volunteer forms

The following forms are available in the school office as well as the school website (<http://mct.ab.mec.edu>):

- Lunch Ticket Order forms
- Bus and Dismissal passes

Attendance

Truancy and Attendance

In order for children to have a successful learning experience and feel that they are an integral member of the class, it is important that they be present when school is in session. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76I, Section 1 states a student "may be excused up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any period of six months." One of the keys to academic improvement is good attendance with consistent participation in school.

Parents, as well as students, have the responsibility to ensure that attendance at school is regular and timely. Schools are required by law to keep track of attendance and are also required by law to address any problems. This can be simply to notify the parent of the issue and work together to improve the student's attendance. In extreme instances, it may require the assistance of the Court of Department of Social Services.

Student Visitors

The school is unable to accommodate student visitors during school hours. This includes relatives, friends or other school aged children who wish to visit the school with an MCT student during the school day.

Early Student Arrivals

Students should not be in the school building unsupervised. Students should not arrive at school any more than 15 minutes before the official beginning of the school day. If a student arrives prior to this time, the student must remain outside the building. There is no supervision provided for a child prior to this time.

Attendance/Safe Arrival

If a student will be absent or tardy, a parent **must** use the Safe Arrival Telephone tape to notify the school. **The telephone number for the Safe Arrival tape is 978-264-4098.** If a student is marked absent and the Safe Arrival tape was not notified, a parent volunteer will call a parent at home or at work to verify that the child is safe. If a parent cannot be reached and there is a concern about the safety of that child, the Police Department will be called.

Tardiness

Students are discouraged from coming in late to school. As the agenda for the day is often discussed at the beginning of the day, it is difficult for students who are tardy to get oriented to the expectations of the day. Students who do arrive late must sign in in the office before going to their classrooms. **(See Appendix 6 for pertinent information.)**

Dismissal

Request to Leave School Early

A written request, available in the office, to have a student excused from school early should be sent with the child on the morning of the dismissal, including the time and reason for leaving. Early dismissal is discouraged, as important classroom activities take place at the end of each day. As classroom time is highly valued, all medical appointments should be made outside of school hours, whenever possible. For purposes of safety, a child will be released only to their parents/guardians unless the school has been notified in writing by the parents that they have granted permission for someone else to pick up their child. The

parent, or authorized person, **MUST** come to the office to sign out the child and have the student dismissed from the classroom.

General Dismissal Procedures

Please be aware that no dismissal arrangements will be taken over the phone.

All students who have permission and are not going home on the school bus (walkers, bikers, students to be picked up by parent) will be discharged by teachers from classrooms five minutes before the students taking buses.

Students being picked up should meet their parents in the lobby after the parent has signed his/her child out in the office. Students who ride the bus are assigned to a bus room. They go to their bus room at dismissal time and wait with the bus room teacher for their bus to arrive. The teacher escorts the students to their bus and loads them onto it.

Parents must notify the school office before any student is removed from the school **at any time**. The parent should also notify daycare providers that the student will not be there due to illness or any other reason. This is important, as daycare providers often call the school worried about missing children. **It is the parent's responsibility to notify the daycare when a child is not going to attend the daycare.**

Students Remaining After School

No student is to remain after school without the consent of both their teacher and parent or guardian. Parents must arrange for transportation if they have agreed to have their child stay after school. Teachers will contact parents if there is a need for children to remain at school after the normal school hours.

Walkers

For the safety of each child, we try to make ourselves aware of the dismissal plans for all of our students. At the beginning of the school year, teachers will gather the names of all students who have written permission from home to walk home on a regular basis.

All students who bring notes requesting permission to walk home just for that day must present those notes to the classroom teacher before permission is granted. These notes are then sent to the office to receive final approval, and to allow us to keep a record of that day's student walkers.

Kindergarten students are not allowed to walk home.

Bicycles

Bicycle racks are located on the school grounds. All bicycles should be locked when placed in the racks. Any damage to bicycles should be reported to the office.

Elementary Bus Pass Procedure

Please be aware that no dismissal arrangements will be taken over the phone.

One-Day Bus Passes

1. When buses are not full, a one-day bus pass will be issued to students in grades 1 through 6 for any purpose, provided that the parent or guardian notifies the child's school in writing on the appropriate form. Forms are available in the school office.
2. One-day bus passes will not be issued to kindergarten students except in a case of an emergency determined by the Principal.

Permanent Bus Passes

1. Permanent bus passes will be issued to students in grades 1 - 6 who will be attending an after school program on a regular weekly schedule. A permanent bus pass must be submitted by the parent or guardian on the appropriate form. Forms are available in the school office.
2. To make a permanent change for a kindergarten student, a parent or guardian must contact the Transportation Department (978-264-4700, ext. 3228) for permission. Then a parent or guardian must submit a permanent bus pass to the school office on the appropriate form. Forms are available in the school office.

School Cancellation

Do not call the Acton Fire or Police departments to determine whether or not schools have been canceled. This practice seriously interferes with the respective departments' notification of emergencies and ability to respond in a timely fashion.

Parents are advised to listen carefully to radio/TV announcements to determine whether school will be canceled for the day. Check the school system's web site (ab.mec.edu) for cancellation information and to sign up for the AB Emergency Notification mailing list. If the weather is threatening, and parents will not be home that day, parents should make arrangements for their children in the event that school closes early. **It is the parent/guardian responsibility to monitor school cancellations.**

Emergency Dismissal

In the event that school is dismissed prior to the regular dismissal time due to emergency conditions, i.e. weather, heat, or electrical problems, students will be sent to the location they normally go to on that day. An Emergency Dismissal handout is sent home at the beginning of the school year with each child. You should use this handout to review and discuss with your child where he/she should go if they come home and you are not at home. Please do not count on being able to reach the school by telephone on a day such as this. The school lines are usually quite busy. **THE SCHOOL IS NOT ABLE TO NOTIFY PARENTS.**

School Visitors and Volunteers

All visitors and volunteers **must** report to the main office upon their arrival. They must sign in and obtain a VISITOR'S PASS before visiting any classrooms, cafeteria, playground, or any other part of the school. Before leaving, visitors should turn in their pass and sign out. For the safety of all children, no parent/adult is permitted to go to a classroom without first obtaining permission from the office.

According to State Law Chapter 385 of the Acts of 2002, anyone who may have "direct and unmonitored contact with children" must have a CORI (Criminal Offense Release Information) check done prior to volunteering in the school.

Parent Involvement

Some of the ways that McCarthy-Towne parents are involved are as:

School Volunteers:

Buddy Family • Bulletin • Bulletin Boards/Art Displays • Computer Lab • Hearing and Vision Testing/Assistance with Immunizations • Lamination • Library • Lost and Found • New Family Support • Office • Pinch Hitter • School Council • School Tour Guide • Sloyd • Student Council: Eco-Team; Snack Sale • Special projects: MCT Cookbook, Sixth Grade Graduation Events

Classroom Volunteers:

General classroom assistance • Special projects: cooking, crafts, bookmaking, etc. • Field trip drivers and chaperones • Clerical help • Curriculum Resources

Parent Teacher Student Organization (P.T.S.O) Committee Members:

Co-chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary • Bulletin • Cultural and Performing Arts • Fund Raising (Auction, Gift Wrap, School Pop, GM Box tops, etc.) • Grant Writing • Health and Safety • Hospitality • Inter-School Council Representatives • Parker Damon Building Committee Representation • Parent Education • Publicity • Safe Arrival • School Committee Liaison • School Directory • Socials • "Trick or Treat for UNICEF"

MCT School Council

The state Board of Education has mandated that every school in Massachusetts have a School Council. The Council consists of parents, the school principal, faculty and community members.

The School Council at MCT serves as one of the focal points for community conversations about the long term goals of the school and progress toward these goals. The School Council increases communication within the school community. It provides a forum for faculty, parent and community representatives to air "hot button" issues, thorny problems and difficult situations. These discussions can occur away from the pressures that may exist in other forums.

The job of the School Council is to decide how these concerns might be handled and to make recommendations for doing so to the appropriate group or individual. MCT's faculty, PTSO Steering Committee and Student Council frequently serve as the mechanisms for accomplishing whatever needs to be done in these ways.

THE CLASSROOM

Parent – Teacher Conferences

Conferences between teachers, students, and parents are relied upon for the exchange of information, expectations, and concerns as well as for the solution of problems. Teachers generally schedule at least two conferences—one in the fall and one in the spring. Younger siblings are not to be brought to these conferences. These conferences are in place of the system's report cards. Other conferences may be initiated by students, teachers, and parents. It is expected that conferences will include as many individuals as is appropriate, and will occur as needed.

Homework

Homework is seen as being an integral part of the instructional process and learning experience. Homework may be assigned to extend or supplement a lesson, or as preparation for a lesson, test, or other learning experience. Students may be assigned homework if they have not completed their in-school class work or if they have missed a learning activity due to absence. Reading books, studying spelling words, writing a report, doing research, conducting an interview, drawing a picture or map, practicing math operations, and watching a special program on TV are examples of homework assigned at MCT. In addition to being closely linked to the content of the curricula, homework is also seen as one method of helping students learn to take responsibility for a commitment, plan their time, practice a skill, and exercise their initiative.

Homework assignments, in general, are designed for most children to be able to complete independently. Parents can help their child by providing adequate time for their child to complete assignments, a quiet place to work and encouragement that their child seek teacher's assistance if/when it is necessary.

Kindergarten

- Students are responsible for remembering to bring library books, sneakers for physical education and "home" reading books back to school on the day needed.
- Students may have optional handwriting practice.
- Students may have special assignments.

First Grade

- Same as kindergarten
- Students will do work missed due to absences.

Second Grade

- Students may have a weekly homework packet.
- Students are expected to read 20 to 30 minutes per day.

Third Grade

- Students have 30 minutes per night.
- Students are expected to read every day in addition to this time.

Fourth Grade

- Students have 45 minutes per night.
- Students are expected to read every day as part of their homework.

Fifth and Sixth Grade

- 40 to 60 minutes per night
- Students are expected to read every day as part of their homework.

Further communication of information to parents about homework is accomplished in various ways, including Back to School night, newsletters, and emails.

Field Trips

Field trips are planned as part of the educational experience for students. In order to attend the trip, prior to any field trip, each student must bring in a permission slip signed by his/her parent or guardian.

Field Trip Policy for Children Who Have Insect Bite and/or Allergy Reactions Requiring Emergency Medication

Parents of known bee sting reactors and children with allergic conditions requiring emergency medication are encouraged to familiarize their children with the use of the EpiPen kits and the self-injection procedure and/or other emergency procedures. On field trips and other occasions when the class will be away from school, it is strongly suggested that the child who cannot self-inject be accompanied by a parent.

Absences Due To Vacation During School Time

Teachers are not responsible for providing work in advance for students who miss school due to vacations taken during school time. Teachers will maintain a collection of assignments done in class during the child's absence and provide a reasonable period of time for the student to make up work missed. Students may not take reading books with them on vacations as we do not have extra materials. However, they can borrow the book being read in class from the local library.

MCAS Testing Program

David Driscoll, the Commissioner of Education, writes: "The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the Commonwealth's statewide testing program for all public school students, developed in response to the

Education Reform Law of 1993. MCAS is based on the rigorous academic learning standards contained in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks." Students in grades 3-6 will be taking different aspects of the MCAS tests during the school year. In the fall, parents will get more detailed information about the year's specific testing schedule and the subjects being tested at each grade level. Families should not schedule vacation or non-emergency appointments during the scheduled testing period.

Placement Process

The faculty spends a great deal of time and energy placing students from one class and grade to the next. The classroom teachers and specialists take into account all sorts of information and go through a laborious process to arrive at balanced groupings. After the groups have been created, the principal will assign a teacher to each group.

It is because teachers take the responsibility of placing students so seriously that we do not accept requests for a specific teacher. If there is a situation that requires special consideration, then parents should write to the principal about what these needs are and what kinds of strategies, techniques, or situations

might be used to meet them. The principal will then make this information available to the classroom teachers so they may consider it along with other factors during the placement process.

Policy on Competitions Sponsored by Non-School Organizations

The McCarthy-Towne faculty believe competition between students and schools is usually more harmful than beneficial. In order to avoid the negative effects of competition, the faculty carefully evaluate all proposed events which may have competitive implications, such as contests, curriculum fairs, festivals or exhibits. Competitions and the like that are sponsored or promoted by organizations outside the school are considered for approval on a case by case basis. Events which do not foster the values of McCarthy-Towne will not be approved for use in school.

Religion and Prayer in School

As part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, there are guidelines regarding the rights of students to pray in public schools. As stated by the Secretary of Education "...the First Amendment forbids religious activity that is sponsored by the government but protects religious activity that is initiated by private individuals."

The law further states "...school officials may not compel students to participate in prayer or other religious activities. Nor may teachers, school administrators and other school employees, when acting in their official capacities as representatives of the state, encourage or discourage prayer, or participate in such activities with students.

"If a school has a "minute of silence" or other quiet periods during the school day, students are free to pray silently, or not to pray, during these periods of times. Teachers and other school employees may neither encourage nor discourage students from praying during such times."

Property and Books

Books and other school property are loaned to the student with the understanding that if they are lost or damaged they must be paid for.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of McCarthy-Towne students is one of the highest priorities for faculty, students, and parents.

Health Office

There is a full time registered nurse on our staff.

When to Notify the Nurse

The school nurse is concerned about the health of all students and staff. Please contact the nurse when your child has any communicable disease or any condition that requires special follow-up (**See Appendix 5 for Immunization Policy.**)

Medication Policy (Revised April 1998)

Whenever possible, prescription medication should be administered at home. When a physician specifies that medication be administered during the school day, the nurse should be contacted, and the following guidelines will be used to supervise medication administration in school;

1. All medication should be brought to the Health Office at the beginning of the day, **by a responsible adult**, accompanied by a signed and dated note, giving the nurse permission to administer the medication.

Send only a **30-day supply** (30 school days);

2. **The medication must be in the original container, with a prescription label** that includes the following information: child's full name, name of medication, prescription number, dosage, and time to be administered; and

3. Emergency medication will be administered when ordered by the family physician or the school physician.

Protocol Medications

1. Acetaminophen
2. Topical Medication: Caladryl, Bacitracin
3. Benadryl and Epinephrine (Emergency use only)

Please sign the designated area on the back of your child's emergency card if you wish to authorize the administration of protocol medication (throughout the year) by the nurse.

Over the Counter Medication (except protocol medication)

1. Can only be given after a parent/guardian has supplied the school with a signed permission note.
2. The medication must be supplied by the family and kept in its original container (we will not accept medication in baggies or envelopes). The nurse does not keep stock medication.

Accident and Illness

A sick or injured student will not be dismissed from school until it is cleared through the Health Office.

In any serious emergency, every attempt will be made to contact the parent or his/her designee. The designees are listed on the emergency card. Please list three people to contact with local addresses. In cases where parents or their designees cannot be contacted, the school's administrator and/or nurse will take whatever emergency action is deemed necessary.

It is expected that parents will keep a child at home if he or she shows signs of illness (fever, cough, chills, sore throat, earache, etc.)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulation requires that in the event that a student contracts chicken pox, she/he may not return to school until one week from the appearance of the last eruption.

Fever

Fevers are generally a sign of illness/infection. Your child should stay home if his/her temperature is 100 F or above. He/she should not return to school until their temperature has been normal (98 - 99 F) for at least 24 hours.

Cold, Cough, Sore Throat

Most children can attend school with cold symptoms as long as they do not have a fever. If your child has a cold with a fever over 100 F, he/she should be kept at home and your healthcare provider should be consulted. Your child should also stay at home if they have a greenish nasal discharge or cough production. A sore throat with a fever, swollen glands, headache, stomachache, or rash may indicate strep. You should consult your child's doctor for evaluation. **If a child has scarlet fever, strep throat, or any strep infection, he/she may return to school twenty-four hours after medication has started. Children are not to be sent to school while waiting for the results of throat culture.**

Stomachache, Vomiting, Diarrhea

A child with vomiting and/or diarrhea should be kept at home until symptoms have resolved for at least 12 hours. Your child also needs to be able to eat and drink normally before returning. Consult your doctor if you suspect dehydration.

Red Eye

Your child should stay home if he/she has red eyes that itch and/or have a crusty discharge. Consult your doctor for evaluation of possible conjunctivitis. Your child may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

Pain

- Earache - consult your doctor if your child complains of ear pain.
 - Toothache- consult your dentist.
 - Headache- if headaches are frequent you should consult your doctor.
- Dehydration, fatigue, and stress can cause a headache.

Rash

A rash is usually a sign of a viral illness. It also may be a reaction to medication, plants, or chemicals such as soaps or detergents. If your child has an unusual rash or it is associated with a fever, contact your doctor.

Lice

Acton policy requires that students be excluded from school if head lice are found. They may return to school only after treatment and only if all lice or eggs have been removed. The child should report to the Health Office upon reentry.

Universal Precautions for the School Setting

It is imperative for the health of our students and staff that all blood drips and spills be treated as potentially dangerous. The HIV virus is transmitted by blood and other body fluids. The Hepatitis B virus can live dried on a surface for up to one week and has the same mode of transmission. Each staff member has a packet containing latex gloves, gauze pads, and a copy of the "Universal Precautions for School Settings." The precautions must be posted in a visible place in each classroom and office, and the glove/gauze packet must be hung or taped nearby so that they are readily available to students and staff. You are encouraged to take a few moments to read the Universal Precautions and stress to your child the importance of practicing them.

If you have any questions, please see your School Nurse.

Physical Screening Examinations

Hearing and vision tests are given yearly to every student by the nurse, and notices are sent to parents in those situations where there is a need for examination by a qualified physician. These tests are basic screening exams and should not be considered substitutes for complete hearing and vision tests. Postural screening exams for fifth and sixth graders will be done by the school nurse and the physical education teacher.

The students will be notified in advance so that they can wear appropriate clothing. Referrals will be made if discrepancies are noted.

School Insurance

All children attending public schools in Acton should be covered by accident insurance. Information is distributed in the early Fall each year concerning an inexpensive plan offered through the school for those families who do not already carry insurance coverage or who wish to have additional insurance.

Animals in the School Building

1. No animals may be brought into the school building without the permission of the school principal.
2. Animals must not be kept in the building any longer than necessary to serve the purpose for which they were brought.
3. If animals are kept in the school building, appropriate attention must be given to the protection and health of pupils and staff and to the care of and prevention of cruelty to the animals. **No animal known to cause allergic and/or respiratory reactions to any student in a school will be admitted.**
4. When physically handled, gloves must be used in order to prevent bites or infections in the following circumstances:
 - a. when the animal is unknown;
 - b. when gerbils are handled;
 - c. when there is any question about the temperament of the animal.
5. Only cages meeting school requirements for safety, sanitation, and adequate animal care may be used to hold animals.
6. Unless a cage has an automatic food and water dispenser, pets must be taken home on weekends. All rodents and rabbits must have wood to chew on in the cage.
7. Animals are not to be left in school during school vacations - except in science lab for which special arrangements for care can be planned.
8. Disposable utensils are recommended for use inside cages. Otherwise, regular and frequent cleaning should be planned.
9. Cages, trays, and utensils must not be washed in sinks used for human washing or drinking. They should be washed in wash basins or sinks used for maintenance operation.
10. No experimentation which may be harmful or cruel to animals shall be undertaken.
11. An animal known to arouse a phobia in a child should not be housed in that classroom.

12. Wild, undomesticated mammals such as raccoons and weasels should not be permitted to be brought into the school building with the exception of those under the supervision of a trained person.

Emergency Procedures

The school district has adopted an Emergency Response Plan to address a range of emergency situations. The plan is available in the school office. See page 9 regarding school cancellations.

Fire Drills/Alarms

At the sound of the fire alarm, all students are to stop talking and follow the instructions of the supervising teacher. Orderly lines should be maintained while proceeding to a designated safe location. No talking is allowed at any time during the drill.

Teachers should:

- a. Establish order at the alarm;
- b. Close windows and doors;
- c. Exit quickly and proceed to a designated area;
- d. Check attendance when at assigned areas; and
- e. Report any missing student to the Principal or secretary.

Custodians and secretaries should:

- a. Check bathrooms and direct unattended students to nearest exit;
- b. Check fire doors; and
- c. Ascertain cause of alarm and report it to fire officer.

Teachers not in their classrooms at the time of the fire alarms should meet their class at the predetermined designated area and relieve the supervisor until the termination of the drill. All other specialists should assist classroom teachers where and when necessary. Specialists should exit the building along with the students in their rooms at the sound of the fire alarm and proceed to the predetermined designated area.

All personnel, except the custodians and the Principal, must evacuate the building at the sound of the alarm.

A copy of the **FIRE DRILL EXIT PLAN** has been developed for the school and is posted in each classroom.

Do not reenter building until notified by the Principal.

Lunch and Milk Programs

Lunch is served at school every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Monthly school lunch menus are sent home at the beginning of each month and are available on the school website (<http://mct.ab.mec.edu>). Free or reduced-price lunches are available for those who qualify. Milk can be purchased by

those students who bring their lunch from home. Students are encouraged to purchase lunch tickets in advance.

Clothing

Students should be dressed appropriately for school and for all weather conditions. The students are outside not only going to and from school, but also during the daily recess. A reasonable guideline is for students wear clothing that allows them to perform all school activities comfortably without drawing undue attention to themselves. Please be sure that students have easily found hooks on their jackets and coats so that outdoor clothing can be hung neatly.

Lost and Found

Lost and found items are placed in a specially designated area. Children's clothing and personal property should be labeled clearly with their names written in a clear and visible manner. Periodically, all items in the lost and found that are unclaimed are donated to a local charity.

ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR COMPUTERS, INTERNET, AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY

The Acton Public Schools has "Acceptable Use Guidelines" for computers and the Internet. It is important for students to be familiar with these guidelines to ensure their understanding of the safe and appropriate uses of technology. Parents are encouraged to discuss the contents of this policy with their children. In addition, faculty will review it with their students at the beginning of each school year to establish standards for use and to reemphasize safety guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns about the "Acceptable Use Guidelines," please contact your elementary school Principal . The "Acceptable Use Guidelines" are:

1. Acceptable Use

At school, I may use computers and the Internet to research, to learn, and to communicate with others. I agree to follow the rules of appropriate behavior while on the Internet. I will follow these rules:

- I will not copy material and say that I wrote it myself.
- I will only use web sites that are suitable for children;

2. Privileges

Being able to use the Internet is a privilege, and my teachers and Principal are the decision makers when it comes to whether I may use it. If my behavior on the computer or Internet is not appropriate, I may lose this privilege;

3. Etiquette

I am expected to follow the rules for appropriate behavior on the Internet. Some (but not all) of those rules are listed below:

- Be polite when writing a message.

- Use appropriate language.
- Remember that e-mail is not private.
- What I write may be seen by others.
- Information that I get from the Internet is for me to use, but I do not own it, and I did not write it. I must identify where I found it.

4. Online Safety

I will follow these Internet safety rules:

- I will not give out personal information about myself or others (such as, home address, telephone number, parents' work address, or parents' work telephone number) to anyone on the Internet.
- If I find anything on the Internet that makes me uncomfortable or nervous, I will get an adult to help me immediately.
- If I get a message that is mean or frightening, I will tell a responsible adult.
- The Acton Public School System is not responsible for the truth or quality of the information that I find on the Internet.

5. Security

I will only use the Internet when a teacher or responsible adult is present.

6. Vandalism

- I will not cause any damage to computers or change how they are set up.
- I will not modify or delete files that belong to others.
- Passwords given to me are for my use only. I will not give it to anyone else.
- I will not use anyone else's password

Any of these actions will result in the loss of my privilege to use the Internet, and perhaps the computers themselves.

Cellular Telephones

Many students have cell phones and bring them to school so that the cell phone is available to them either before or after school hours. That being said, students may not use cell phones during the school day.

- Cell phones and other mobile devices should not be seen, heard, or viewed during school hours. They must be kept in the student's backpack.
- If a mobile device in any way disrupts or distracts a class, it will be taken away and held for a parent to pick up.

BEHAVIOR AT SCHOOL

The McCarthy-Towne Behavior Contract is the foundation on which our expectations for appropriate behavior at school are built. The Behavior Contract is sent home at the beginning of each school year for parents and students to discuss and sign. Classroom teachers remind students of the importance of the Behavior Contract throughout the year and base their behavior expectations upon it.

McCarthy-Towne Behavior Contract

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At McCarthy-Towne the students, parents, volunteers and faculty work together to foster a community where everyone feels safe and respected. A common set of standards for behavior has been established to provide everyone with clear guidelines for expected student behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior. We believe that students respect and appreciate reasonable limits and feel more secure when they know what is expected of them.

The following is a list of behavioral expectations for all students throughout the school day, in all areas of the building, and at all school functions.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

1. Students will be kind to others with words, gestures and deeds.
2. Students will respect other people's property.
3. Students will accept responsibility for their own behavior, if they do something wrong.
4. Students will understand that adults are responsible for running the school and enforcing the rules.

THEREFORE:

1. Students will not hurt others (tease, threaten, hit etc.)
2. Students will not touch, take or break someone else's property.
3. Students will not swear or use rude language.
4. Students will not be disrespectful or rude to adults.

CONSEQUENCES FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

All adults at McCarthy-Towne are responsible for supervising student behavior. Most inappropriate behavior can be handled in a timely and effective manner by the classroom teacher or supervising adult. When a violation of the Code of Behavior occurs, however, one or more of the following procedures will be followed:

- Warning is given.
- Time out is given.
- An Incident Report is filled out. A copy of that report is given to the classroom teacher and filed in the office.
- The classroom teacher will decide if the incident merits follow-up or not. If it is serious, whether or not it is a first or multiple offense, the teacher will be responsible for contacting the parents and/or involving the principal or school counselor.
- Students will face "natural and logical consequences" for their behaviors whenever possible (missing recess, cleaning up a mess, fixing something that has been broken, etc.)

PARENTS OF ALL CHILDREN INVOLVED WILL BE NOTIFIED WHEN:

1. A child is hurt and needs to be sent to the nurse.
2. An offense occurs which is thought to be serious by a supervising adult.
3. Repeat offenses occur.
4. When a child needs to receive a long-term consequence.
5. When behavior relates to racial, ethnic, sexual or religious put-downs.

INCIDENT REPORT

Date: _____ Person Submitting : _____

Where did incident occur? (Please circle)

Bus room/line Playground Cafeteria

Music Sloyd Library

Computer Lab Hallways Gym

Assembly Classroom Other _____

Who was involved?

_____, _____, _____

Specific Type of Behavior: (Please circle)

Physical Action - People: Teasing, hitting, kicking, pushing, fighting

Physical Action - Property: Damaging property, stealing

Verbal Action: Teasing, name calling, swearing, fighting, threatening

Disobedience

Meanness

Other

Briefly describe what happened:

Seriousness of Incident: (Please circle)

FYI - No further intervention needed

Further action is recommended

Behaviors Resulting in Serious Consequences

In order to establish and maintain a positive learning environment, we expect behaviors that reflect mutual respect, cooperation, and tolerance. Students are not to engage in actions that infringe upon the rights of others. Behaviors that threaten the safety, property, or self-esteem of others may be subject to serious disciplinary action.

Each of the behaviors below may result in consideration of suspension from school, and the student may be subject to expulsion by the Principal.

Parents/guardians are expected to meet with school administration prior to the student's returning to school. Legal action may follow any of these behaviors and financial restitution may be required as appropriate.

Bomb Threats

Under Massachusetts General Law 269-14, making a bomb threat can result in a \$10,000 dollar fine and/or be further punishable by law. Any student involved in making a false threat will be suspended from school for 10 days, fined, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Anyone with information involving these incidents should report it to the school office.

Dangerous Weapons

Possession of a firearm or other dangerous weapon in the building, on any school bus, or on the grounds of an elementary or secondary school, including while in attendance at any school-sponsored or related event, is a crime punishable by a fine of more more than \$1000.00 dollars or further punishable by law. Possession of any weapon in school will minimally warrant a student's suspension from school, and the student may be subject to expulsion and possible legal action. **(See Appendix 1 for pertinent law).**

Harassment

This may include, but is not limited to, threatening language or behavior, assault, inappropriate touching, intentionally impeding movement, or continuing comments, gestures, or written communications of a suggestive or derogatory nature, including sexual harassment. **(See Appendix 3 for pertinent law.)**

Disruption of School

Acts intended to interrupt or impede the normal operation of school.

False Fire Alarms

Under Massachusetts General Law 269-13, pulling a false fire alarm can bring a \$500.00 fine and be further punishable by law. Any student pulling a false fire alarm may be suspended from school for 10 days, fined, and may be punished to the fullest extent of the law. Anyone with information involving these incidents should report it to the school office.

Stealing

Stealing is defined as "theft of personal or school property, receiving stolen items, or possession of stolen items."

Vandalism

Vandalism is defined as "willful, malicious, or careless actions leading to the destruction of, or damage to, school or personal property. "

See Appendix 10 for Discipline for Special Education Students

Student/Parent Right of Appeal (Due Process)

Students and/or parents have a right to appeal the consequences for the students misbehavior. They may request an opportunity to present their point of view or to justify their actions. The consequences of the alleged student

behavior will be suspended until the case is reviewed. If the student or parent feels that the student's consequence has been applied unfairly, the following steps should be taken:

1. The student is first advised to seek a meeting with the person(s) involved, to see if an informal resolution can be achieved.
2. If the matter is not resolved at the first step, then an appeal may be made to the Principal. The Principal may seek to resolve the matter informally, and/or conduct a more formal hearing. Such a hearing is chaired by the Principal and normally includes each of the parties involved.
3. If the issue is not resolved at the second step, then an appeal may be made to the Superintendent of Schools. In such cases, a hearing is held with the Superintendent and all persons involved.
4. If the issue is not resolved at the third step, then an appeal may be made to the School Committee. In such cases, a hearing is held with the School Committee and all persons involved.

TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Student School Bus Behavior Regulations

Students are expected to behave in an orderly manner while riding the bus and during loading and unloading procedures. The bus driver shall be in complete charge of the bus and its passengers at all times and shall ensure the safety and well-being of all students who ride the school buses.

Students shall observe the following rules and safety procedures and are encouraged to wear seat belts:

1. The driver's instructions shall be followed at all times;
2. Students will only ride their assigned bus to and from the assigned stops; Drivers will not allow unauthorized students to board the bus;
3. State law prohibits lighting of matches or smoking on the bus;
4. The parents of the student(s) must assume liability for any bus vandalism involved;
5. No pushing or shoving at the bus stop;
6. Line up single file to board the bus. Do not run toward the bus as it is preparing to stop but wait until the bus has stopped completely before approaching the door;
7. Find a vacant seat quickly and sit down;
8. Remain seated while the bus is in motion;
9. Keep hands and feet to yourself. Do not disturb others;
10. Do not shout or make distracting noises. Speak quietly to others around you. Neither profanity nor obscenity will be acceptable aboard the bus;
11. Do not change seats or leave your seat unless instructed to do so by the driver;
12. No pushing or shoving when getting off the bus. Leave your seat quickly and quietly;

13. Upon departing the bus, walk away from the bus. Do not walk along the side of the bus;
14. If you must cross the street after getting off the bus, cross in front of the bus far enough ahead so that you and the driver can see each other. Look both ways before crossing the street for your own safety;
15. Consumption of food or beverage is not permitted on the bus;
16. The emergency door at the rear of the bus is to be used as an exit only in case of an emergency;
17. Throwing objects on or around the bus or at the bus stop is not permitted; and
18. Objects that may create a hazard on the bus will not be permitted, such as sharp objects, animals, or excessively large items which cannot be transported safely or which cause an inconvenience to other passengers due to insufficient seating space. The Bus Transportation Office reserves the right to make this determination.

Students' Rights

1. Students will be given the opportunity to express their views to their respective Principal prior to any disciplinary action being taken because of a formal complaint from a bus driver.
2. Students will be transported until such time that disciplinary action is taken. Students will be transported to their designated destination. No arbitrary decision can be made by the driver to discharge a student at a location other than the student's authorized destination.

Disciplinary Action

Bus drivers have been instructed to prepare formal reports in case of student misconduct aboard the bus. The following procedure will be followed after the report has been received by the building Principal:

1. First Offense - Principal speaks to the student and a first notice is sent home to parents. In addition, the Principal will either speak with the parent or send a letter home (which requires written acknowledgment of receipt) explaining the situation and the potential consequences of a subsequent offense. In serious incidents, the Principal may elect to suspend bus privileges;
2. Second Offense - Principal speaks to student and a second notice is sent home. Principal may elect to suspend bus privileges;
3. Subsequent Offenses - Principal speaks to student, a notice is sent home and this shall result in an automatic one- (1) week suspension of bus privileges. The Principal shall continue to work with the parents and student when subsequent offenses occur;
4. Violation of State Laws (e.g., smoking or lighting of matches) will result in an automatic one (1)-week suspension of bus privileges.
5. The Principal will determine the time of suspension of bus privileges in all cases, based on the seriousness of the offense. In the case of an offense where

an automatic one (1)-week suspension is required, he or she may decide to lengthen the suspension.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SCHOOL POLICIES AND DISCIPLINE

(INCLUDING REGULATIONS ON STUDENT HANDBOOKS, WEAPONS, SMOKING, EXPULSION)

MASS GENERAL LAWS CHAPTER 71, SEC. 37H

The Superintendent of every school district shall publish the district's policies pertaining to the conduct of teachers and students. Said policies shall prohibit the use of any tobacco products within the school buildings, the school facilities or on the school grounds or on school buses by any individual, including school personnel. Copies of these policies shall be provided to any person upon request and without cost by the principal of every school within the district.

Each school district's policies pertaining to the conduct of students shall include the following: disciplinary proceedings, including procedures assuring due process; standards and procedures for suspension and expulsion of students; procedures pertaining to discipline of students with special needs; standards and procedures to assure school building security and safety of students and school personnel; and the disciplinary measures to be taken in cases involving the possession or use of illegal substances or weapons, the use of force, vandalism, or violation of other student's civil rights. Codes of discipline, as well as procedures used to develop such codes shall be filed with the department of education for informational purposes only.

In each school building containing grades nine to twelve, inclusive, the principal, in consultation with the school council, shall prepare and distribute to each student a student handbook setting forth the rules pertaining to the conduct of students. The school council shall review the student handbook each spring to consider changes in the disciplinary policy to take effect in September of the following school year, but may consider policy changes at any time. The annual review shall cover all areas of student conduct, including but not limited to those outlined in this section.

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, all student handbooks shall contain the following provisions:

(a). Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school district by the principal.

(b). Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff in school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(c). Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, a principal, may, in his/her discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(d). Any student who has been expelled from a district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his[her] appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(e). When a student is expelled under the provisions of this section, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such a student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district shall receive from the superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

Mass. General Laws Chapter 71, Section 37H as amended by Section 36 of Chapter 71 of the Acts of 1993 (the Education Reform Act), and further amended by Section 1 of Chapter 380 of the Acts of 1993.

APPENDIX 2 NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, handicap or homeless in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs, and activities.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts' compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or Chapter 622 is directed to contact the Director of Pupil Services, Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA, telephone number 978-264-4700, x3265, who has been designated by the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts to coordinate the Districts' efforts to comply with these laws, or write to:

Office for Civil Rights,

33 Arch Street,

Suite 900, Boston, MA 02110, or

Massachusetts Department of Education,

Office of Program Quality Assurance, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148.

TITLE IX GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The following is the procedure by which student and employee complaints alleging any action prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may be resolved.

Any student or employee who believes that he or she has a legitimate complaint alleging any action prohibited by Title IX is urged to bring it to the School Districts attention through this grievance procedure. Any such grievance should be initiated within 15 days of the incident giving rise to it. The student or employee should follow Step I as follows:

STEP I - Contact the Director of Personnel or the Director of Pupil Services who will attempt to resolve the grievance in a fair and timely manner.

Should the attempt to resolve the issue at Step I fail, the grievance may be advanced to Step II within 5 days of the Step I response.

STEP II - The Director of Personnel or the Director of Pupil Services shall forward the grievance and his/her findings, together with any additional information provided by the student or employee, in writing, to the Superintendent. Normally within seven days, the Superintendent will make a final decision, based on all available information, and will forward his or her final written decision to the grievant, normally within 45 days of the original written grievance.

Appointment of Compliance Officer

The Director of Personnel is appointed the School's Compliance Officer.

APPENDIX 3 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual Harassment Policy Pertaining to Students

The Acton Public Schools and the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools (collectively the “Schools”) are committed to providing an educational environment free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment compromises professional relationships and undermines the quality of the educational environment. Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated in any form in the school systems.

The condoning of sexual harassment or the retaliation against an individual because he or she complains of sexual harassment or because he or she assists in the investigation of a complaint of sexual harassment is prohibited.

A. Sexual Conduct towards Students

All school employees, volunteers or contractors are prohibited from making any sexual advances or requests, sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature toward a student, whether or not unwelcome.

B. Sexual Harassment

Employees, volunteers, contractors or students are prohibited from making any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors and from engaging in any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when those advances, requests or conduct have a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the education of a student by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive educational environment. Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to, leering, pinching, grabbing, suggestive verbal comments, off-color jokes, and pressure for sexual activity.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be promptly and fully investigated and steps taken necessary to remedy the situation. These steps or procedures are designed to correct, remedy and discipline violations of the policy. An employee, volunteer or contractor who engages in sexual harassment is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or other services. In the case of a student, disciplinary action may include suspension and/or exclusion from school.

APPENDIX 4 SEX EDUCATION PARENT NOTIFICATION POLICY

Pursuant to Chapter 291 of the General Laws of Massachusetts, the School Committees direct the Superintendent to ensure timely parental/guardian notification of any curriculum used in the Acton Public or Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools which primarily involves human sexuality issues or human sexual education.

This policy allows parents/guardians the flexibility to exempt their children from any portion or completely from the curriculum being offered. The Committees want to encourage the flow information while recognizing the rights of parents.

The following courses contain sexuality issues or human sexual education:

Bio Forum
Senior Seminar
Health/Fitness
Biology

Parents with questions should contact the school nurse or Health Educator Coordinator to review the material.

APPENDIX 5 IMMUNIZATION POLICY RELATING TO NEW STUDENTS

The School Committees support the Massachusetts School Immunization Law, Chapter 76, Section 15 which states, “No child shall, except as hereinafter provided, be admitted to school except upon presentation of a physicians’ certificate that the child has been successfully immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, and poliomyelitis and such other communicable diseases as may be specified from time to time by the Department of Public Health.

APPENDIX 6 TRUANCY AND ATTENDANCE PARENT INFORMATION

There is no doubt that one of the keys to academic achievement is good attendance. Consistent participation in school and school-based activities is important for making a successful transition from youth to adulthood. Student tardiness and truancy are challenges that confront many communities in Middlesex and across the state. Often, these behaviors are the first indicators that a student may be experiencing stress or other difficulties in his or her life.

The following is a summary of some of the Massachusetts General Laws pertaining to attendance:

School Attendance

Chapter 76, section 1 of the Massachusetts General Laws states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. A school

district may excuse up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions

in any period of six months. In addition to this law, each school may have its own attendance policy with which parents and guardians should be familiar.

Who is a Supervisor of Attendance

Chapter 76, section 19 of the Massachusetts General Laws states that each

school committee must employ a supervisor of attendance. A supervisor

of attendance has the power to apprehend and take to school any child who

is truant and is required to investigate all cases where a child in the district fails to attend school.

What is a CHINS?

A "CHINS" (Child in Need of Services) petition may be filed in court by a supervisor of attendance if a child between the ages of six and sixteen per- sistentlly violates lawful and reasonable regulations of her or her school. The

Court's authority pursuant to a CHINS petition includes the power to place a child in the custody of the state agency known as the Department of Social Services.

What is a 51A?

A 51A is a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that is filed with the Department of Social Services. Under Chapter 119, section 51A of the

Massachusetts General Laws, a report can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of eighteen for educational neglect if a child is not attending school on a regular basis.

Parent Responsibility

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school. It is a crime for a responsible parent or guardian not to cause such a child to attend school. If a child fails to attend school for seven consecutive days or fourteen half day sessions within any six month period, the supervisor of attendance may file a criminal complaint in court against the responsible parent and/or guardian.

Inducing Absences

It is a crime to induce or attempt to induce a minor to miss school, or unlawfully to employ or to harbor a minor who should be in school.

APPENDIX 7 STUDENT RECORDS

The Acton (APS) and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts (ABRSD) adhere to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Massachusetts laws and regulations in providing access to, and confidentiality of student records.

As permitted by these laws, the APS and ABRSD School Committees have designated selected student records to be "directory information." For elementary school students (APS), the following records have been designated as directory information:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Date of birth
- Grade
- Classroom assignment

The Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools will release the designated directory information without the consent of the parent or eligible student, unless the parent or eligible student provides the principal with written notice that he/she does not wish the school to release such information. The notice must be received annually by a date designated by the principal.

The Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools also disclose all student records (which include health records and special education records, if any), without the consent of the parent/eligible student, to officials of other schools in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, upon receipt of a request from such school officials.

To the extent required by applicable law, the Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools will provide parents/eligible students with an annual notice of their general rights relative to student records. The Superintendent will determine the content and method of such notice.

Non-custodial parents must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal. The Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools will respond to the request in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations regarding access by non-custodial parents.

Statutory References:

Family Education and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA): 20 U.S.C. §1232g, 34 CR §99

Massachusetts Student Records Regulations: 603 CMR 23.00, et seq.

Student Records Access for Non-Custodial Parents: General Laws, Chapter 71, §34H Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by NCLB, 20 USC 7908

APPENDIX 8 HOMELESS STUDENTS

Policy Regarding Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

To the extent practical and as required by law, the school districts will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Being abandoned in hospitals;
5. Awaiting foster care placement;
6. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;
8. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The Superintendent has designated the Director of Pupil Services to be the districts' liaison for homeless students and their families and can be contacted at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

APPENDIX 9 CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE

The School Committees recognize and accept the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts' responsibility to comply with the Massachusetts Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Statute, Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 119, Section 51A.

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts recognize that because of their sustained contact with children under the age of eighteen years, school employees will actively carry out the letter and spirit of the law. It is expected then, that when any staff member in his or her professional capacity has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen years is suffering from the effects of any form of child abuse and neglect, that the staff member will report his or her concerns in conformance with the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts' procedures for reporting suspected abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Social Services.

APPENDIX 10 DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related regulations provide eligible Acton and Acton-Boxborough students with certain procedural rights and protections in the context of student discipline. A brief overview of these rights is provided below.

In general, Acton and Acton-Boxborough special education students may be excluded from their programs, just as any other student can be, for up to ten school days per year. However, when a special education student is excluded from his/her program for more than ten school days in the school year, school staff may be required to provide alternative educational services for the student. In addition, in many instances, the student's special education Team must convene to determine whether the student's behavior was a direct result of his/her disability (a "manifestation determination").

If the Team determines the behavior was not a direct result of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student according to the school's code of student conduct, except that the district must continue to provide the student with educational services during the period of suspension or expulsion. However, if the Team determines that the behavior was a direct result of the disability, the student may not be excluded from the current educational placement (except in the case of weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury) until the Team develops and the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent(s) to a new Individualized Educational Program. The Team also must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and develop or revise a behavioral plan for the student.

In the event a student possesses, uses, sells or solicits a substance or possesses a weapon, or seriously injures an individual at school or a school function, a school may place a student in an interim alternative education setting for up to 45 days. Hearing officers may also order the placement of a student in an appropriate interim setting for up to 45 days upon determination that the current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others. When a parent(s)/guardian(s) disagrees with the Team's decision on the "manifestation determination" or with a decision regarding placement, the parent(s)/guardian(s) has a right to request an expedited due process hearing from Bureau of Special Education Appeals.

Additional information regarding the procedural protections for special education students can be obtained from the Director of Pupil Services who can be reached at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

Discipline of Students Subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides eligible students some of the same procedural rights and protections as does IDEA. Additional information regarding the procedural protections for students eligible for services under laws providing for services for students with disabilities can be obtained from the Director of Pupil Services who can be reached at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS NOT YET DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

The IDEA protections summarized under the Discipline of Special Needs Students also apply to students who have not yet been found eligible for IEPs if the school district is deemed to have knowledge that the students were eligible for IEPs before the conduct that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred. The IDEA provides that a school district is “deemed to have knowledge” if: (1) the child’s parent/guardian had expressed concern in writing to district supervisory or administrative personnel or the child’s teacher that the child needs special education and related services; (2) the child’s parent/guardian had requested an evaluation of the child to determine eligibility for special education services; or (3) the teacher of the child or other school district personnel had expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior by the child directly to the district’s director of special education or to other supervisory personnel. However, a school district is not “deemed to have knowledge” if the district evaluated the student and determined that the child was not eligible for special education services or the child’s parent refused an evaluation of the child or IDEA services.

If the school district has no knowledge that a student is an eligible student under the IDEA before taking disciplinary measures against the student, the student may be disciplined just as any other student may be. If, however, a request is made for an evaluation to determine eligibility while the student is subject to disciplinary measures, the district must conduct the evaluation in an expedited manner. Pending the results of the evaluation, the student must remain in the educational placement determined by the school authorities, which may include suspension or expulsion without services. If the student is determined eligible for an IEP as a result of the evaluation, the school district must provide the student with special education and related services in accordance with the IDEA.

Additional information regarding the procedural protections for special education students can be obtained from the Director of Pupil Services who can be reached at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

APPENDIX 11 CHILD STUDY TEAM

The Child Study Team is available for any teacher, administrator, counselor or community member who would like to refer a student who appears to have a significant problem. Problems might be identified in the areas of learning, but might also include behavioral and/or social/emotional concerns. The Team's role is to develop an understanding of the nature of the problem and to make appropriate recommendations. It is not punitive.

The Team generally includes a school psychologist, an administrator, a special educator, and a speech and language specialist. Referral forms are available through the counseling office. All inquiries, reports and referrals are kept strictly confidential.

As mandated by federal and state special education regulations, a student experiencing significant academic difficulty, or significant attendance issues may be brought to the attention of the Child Study Team as part of the pre-referral process. A parent/guardian is entitled under the law to refer his/her child directly for a special education eligibility evaluation, verbally or in writing. That being said, school staff recommend that any student experiencing difficulty be discussed first within the Child Study Team in order to respond quickly to concerns and gather relevant data.

It is important to note that teachers, administrators, counselors or community members may present referrals to the Child Study Team without the student's or parent/guardian's prior knowledge.

APPENDIX 12 RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools comply with the Massachusetts Department of Education's restraint regulations, 603 CMR 46.00 et seq. ("Regulations"), to the extent required by law.

According to their terms, the Regulations apply not only at school but also at school-sponsored events and activities, whether or not on school property.

School staff may use physical restraint only (1) when non-physical interventions would be ineffective and the student's behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious harm to self and/or others or (2) pursuant to a student's IEP or other written plan developed in accordance with state and federal law and approved by the school and parent/guardian.

The regulations do not prevent a teacher, employee or agent of the District from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent serious harm or from restraining students as otherwise provided in the regulations.

Students, parents or guardians who have a complaint regarding physical restraint procedures may request a meeting with the building principal to discuss their concerns. If the issues are not resolved at this level, they may request a meeting with the Superintendent or designee.

Additional information, including a copy of the regulations, can be obtained from the Director of Pupil Services at 978-264-4700, extension 3265.

APPENDIX 13 SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES

1. A good education acknowledges the importance of studying about religion. This study would include such learning activities as an analysis of the role of religion in culture and an appreciation of its importance in order to reach a balanced understanding of civilization and society.
2. The treatment of religion in the schools will meet the Supreme Court's constitutional boundaries set forth in the three-part test of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*: (1) the activity must have a secular purpose, (2) the principal or primary effect of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion, (3) the activity avoids excessive governmental entanglement with religion.
3. Teachers will be sensitive and knowledgeable about the diversity of religious beliefs of the students in their classes. Instructional practices will balance religious beliefs so that all students will feel included; no student will be required to participate in class activities associated with religion if unwilling, or if a parent expresses unwillingness.
4. Community resources and personnel should be used whenever possible by the schools when activities related to religious holidays are planned and implemented.
5. The school system calendar will indicate religious holidays affecting a significant proportion of our population. The school system will indicate holidays that will have an impact upon student participation in school activities.
6. Students will be accommodated if they request of the teacher that they be excused from participating in activities involving religion and/or if they are unable to participate in regular activities due to religious observances. Written parent permission should accompany such student requests.
7. The school will use the standard grievance procedure to resolve differences resulting from the implementation of these guidelines (e.g., appeal to teacher, to principal, superintendent, to the school committee).
8. As stated in the School Committee policy, we recognize that our school community is comprised of individuals with diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. It is our intent to respect our differences and maintain a liberal view of others. Consistent with this, the school system accommodates individual differences in religious observance. Thus, if a student is affected by a religious holiday that is not observed with a school wide closing, that student will be allowed to have additional, reasonable time to complete assignments and assessments that conflict with their holiday observance even in the event that the student attends classes on that day.
9. As part of a study about the role religion plays in history, culture and the arts, teachers may use religious symbols, art, and music as well as literature drawn from a religious tradition.
10. School sports, tryouts and extra-curricular activities should be scheduled so that students will be accommodated if unable to participate due to their observance of a religious holiday.

11. Holiday displays and exhibits in classrooms and schools will be designed to help students appreciate the variety and value of religious traditions in the world. These displays shall not be solely focused on one or two specific holidays.

Activities must have an instructional purpose. The principal effect of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.

12. Programs (assemblies, plays or other activities) conducted during any religious holidays should be evaluated as to their purpose and effect. Their presentation, content, theme or timing must be secular/educational.

13. Music programs should be planned in accordance with the music curriculum objectives. (See also 2, 3, and 6 above.) Music instruction and performance will be designed to help students appreciate the variety and value of cultural and religious traditions in the world.

Approved 10/7/94 and 10/13/94 by the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Procedure #8 revised to reflect current practice on 6/25/07.