

# STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

MANUAL PARA PADRES Y ESTUDIANTES

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**WAKE COUNTY**  
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



What Starts Here Changes Everything.

More information: [www.wcpss.net/handbook](http://www.wcpss.net/handbook)



# WELCOME TO THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

This handbook contains important information about the district's expectations regarding student conduct, student rights, student responsibilities and district policies.

## ACCESS TO POLICIES

Students and families are encouraged to review and discuss the material contained in this handbook, which summarizes several important policies. **Please note that this document is not a comprehensive list of all district policies and that these summaries are not a substitute for the policies themselves.**

All other policies and procedures are available online at [www.wcpss.net/policies](http://www.wcpss.net/policies) and at the central office.

Students and their families are urged to review the actual language of these policies and procedures, which include important information about student rights and responsibilities.

Please contact the administration of your student's school if you have questions about a policy.

Full copies of all of the policies referenced in this handbook are available online at [www.wcpss.net/handbook](http://www.wcpss.net/handbook), at the district's central administrative offices at 5625 Dillard Drive in Cary and at the front office of every school.

## IMPORTANT TOPICS

### *Access to Rigor, Acceleration and Advanced Courses*

Our district provides opportunities for all students to expand their learning through academically challenging coursework and acceleration. See Board Policy regarding Access to Rigor and Acceleration.

### *Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs*

A healthy learning environment is free of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. The possession, use, distribution or sale of these substances in any form is prohibited on school property.

The prohibition of tobacco and nicotine includes all lighted and smokeless e-liquid products, e-cigarettes and vaporizers even if they do not contain tobacco or nicotine.

See Board Policy regarding Prohibition of Alcoholic Beverages, Use of Tobacco and Nicotine Products, and Code of Student Conduct.

### *Assault, Fighting, Threats*

Students who become angry or upset with anyone are encouraged to resolve conflicts peacefully. Teachers, counselors and other school personnel can help students

find civil ways to handle disagreements. A student who threatens to harm, attempts to harm or harms another student, staff member, school volunteer or visitor is subject to consequences. See Board Policy regarding Code of Student Conduct.

### *Attendance*

Coming to school every day ready to learn is important for your child's success—and it's required by state law for children between the ages of 7 and 16. Being tardy to class, skipping class or school, leaving campus without permission or being in an unauthorized area is prohibited. Excused absences include: illness or injury, a death in the family, health care appointments, court appearances, college visits and religious observance.

Virtual Academy students must be logged in, present, and responsive in their assigned virtual space at the beginning of the school day and the beginning of each class to prevent being recorded as tardy. Absences may be excused for issues with technological devices or internet access if a parent informs the student's teacher or attendance office within 24 hours.

### ***Bullying and Harassment***

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviors that should be immediately addressed. Bullying and harassment include any physical act, threatening communication, or pattern of gestures or communications that places a student in actual and reasonable fear of harm or is certain to create a hostile environment. Bullying and harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, behaviors motivated by the victim's identifying characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender identity, religion, age or disability. If bullying or harassment is suspected, parents should contact their child's school for help. Parents and students also can share safety concerns via the WCPSS Tip Line, 919-856-1911. See Board Policy regarding Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying.

### ***Bus Conduct***

Bus transportation is an extension of the school day, and the same student behavior standards that apply in the classroom also apply on the bus and at the bus stop. A driver will report to the school administrator any misconduct or violation of the driver's instructions. Buses also have cameras on board to provide video and audio that school leaders may use to manage student behavior. See Board Policy regarding Code of Student Conduct.

### ***Cheating, Plagiarism***

Cheating and plagiarism, including giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance on academic work or copying and representing another's work as one's own, is prohibited. See Board Policy regarding Honor Code and Code of Student Conduct.

### ***Character Education and Respect***

Every school has programs and activities to help students develop good character, including programs to help students understand, assess and take responsibility for their behavior and learning, as well as how to act responsibly toward others. School staff members ensure that positive behavior is practiced, demonstrated, modeled and reinforced within an environment of mutual respect, caring and dignity. See Board Policy regarding Citizenship and Character Education.

### ***Complaint Procedures***

A student or parent may question a school-based decision by using the procedures outlined in the Board Policy regarding Responding to Complaints.

### ***Child Find for Students with Disabilities***

We are required to identify, locate and evaluate young people with disabilities who may be in need of special education and related services. Parents of children aged two years old or younger who may be in need of such services should contact the Children's Development Services Agency at 919-662-4600. Parents of children aged three or older who are not yet eligible to enter kindergarten should call the WCPSS Child Find Office at 919-431-7700. Parents of children in kindergarten through 12th grade should contact their child's school or call 919-431-7334 (Spanish line: 919-431-7143) or email [facc@wcpss.net](mailto:facc@wcpss.net).

### ***Disability Accommodations***

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, prohibits discrimination against students with diagnosed physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, learning, concentration, walking, seeing, breathing, hearing, lifting, bending, performing manual tasks and the operation of major bodily functions/systems such as the immune, neurological or respiratory systems. For more information, including complaint procedures, please see Board Policy regarding Special Education Programs/Rights of Students with Disabilities.

### ***Dress Code***

Students are expected to adhere to standards of dress and appearance. Our guiding principles for the student dress code are similar to those experienced and expected in the workplace: attire that furthers health and safety of students and staff, enables the educational process, and facilitates the operations of the school. Parents are asked to partner with the district to monitor student attire to help adhere to the guiding principles set forth in the Student Dress Code policy.

### ***English as a Second Language (ESL)***

Language support services are provided to all students identified as English Learners (EL). When a student's home language is not English, we administer a test to identify students who are still learning English as a new language. A plan is then created to help all teachers know the level of English language support your student may need. For more information, contact your child's school or the WCPSS Center for International Enrollment at [CIE@wcpss.net](mailto:CIE@wcpss.net) or (919) 533-7169.

### ***Lose Control, Lose Your License***

North Carolina Senate Bill 57 requires that a student's driving permit or license be revoked for one year if a student is given a suspension for more than 10 consecutive days or an assignment to an alternative educational setting for more than 10 consecutive days for one of the following reasons:

- The possession or sale of an alcoholic beverage or an illegal controlled substance on school property;
- The possession or use on school property of a weapon or firearm that resulted in disciplinary action under N.C. General Statute 115C-391 or that could have resulted in that disciplinary action if the conduct had occurred in a public school;
- The physical assault on a teacher or other school personnel on school property.

### ***Medicaid Rights for Students with Disabilities***

A parent's prior written consent is required for the district to release information needed to access NC Medicaid reimbursement for services provided through a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), Section 504 Plan, Individualized Health Plan (IHP), or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The district may then release a child's name and Medicaid number; date of birth; service documentation, including evaluations; dates and times services are provided at school; and reports of child's progress, including therapist notes and progress notes. Parents may revoke consent at any time. Revoking parental consent does not change the district's responsibility to provide all required services at no cost. The funds collected from Medicaid will be used to provide valuable and necessary additional staffing to meet therapy needs of students, and to purchase assistive technology equipment and materials for individual student needs. Learn more at: <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/finance-grants/medicaid-in-education>.

### ***Non-Discrimination***

In compliance with federal law, the district administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, gender identity, color, religion, national origin, age or disability. We have broad protections against discrimination as set forth in multiple Board policies. Parents and students who perceive any form of discrimination should report it to the school principal. Parents and students also should contact the principal to request assistance or

accommodations to assure a non-discriminatory, inviting and inclusive school environment. See Board Policies regarding Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying and Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Complaint Process.

### ***Parental Right to Withhold Consent and Opt Out***

Parents may request in writing to opt out of any of the following:

- Release of the student's directory information (See Board Policy regarding Student Records);
- Release of the student's name, address and telephone number to military recruiters or colleges/universities (See Board Policy regarding Student Records);
- The student's participation in certain instructional activities related to reproductive health and safety (See Board Policy regarding Comprehensive Healthful Living Education Program);
- The student's participation in certain academic, career guidance, personal or social counseling services provided to students in a group setting (See Board Policy regarding the Counseling Program);
- The student's participation in certain types of surveys (See Board Policy regarding Surveys of Students);
- The student's participation in certain non-emergency physical exams or screenings (See Board Policy regarding Health Services);
- Collection, disclosure or use of the student's personal information for marketing purposes (See Board Policy regarding Surveys of Students);
- The student's participation in online classroom recording (See Board Policy regarding Student Records); and
- Release of child's free and reduced-price meal information to State Medicaid or to the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

### ***Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)***

The PPRA is a federal law that affords parents of elementary and secondary students certain rights regarding the conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. See [www.wcpss.net/PPRA](http://www.wcpss.net/PPRA) and Board Policies regarding Parental Inspection of and Objection to Instructional Materials and Survey of Students.

### ***School Meals***

Student wellness and proper nutrition are related to a student's physical well-being, growth, development and readiness to learn. All meals and other items available for students to purchase from Child Nutrition Services meet strict nutritional requirements. All foods and beverages that are offered to students during the school day should support a school environment that promotes student health and wellness.

### ***School Meals, Charges***

Meals should be paid for in a timely manner. We recognize that students occasionally forget or lose their meal money. In the event that a student is unable to pay for a meal on a particular day, the student may charge a meal so long as it does not create a negative account balance that exceeds the value of three days of meals (breakfast and lunch) based on current student meal prices. If a student is unable to pay for or charge a meal, we will provide an alternate meal at no cost. Parents are notified of low balances in a child's meal account and charge balances that need to be paid off at regular intervals during the school year. See Board Policy regarding Operation of Child Nutrition Services regarding Meal Charges.

### ***School Meals, Free or Reduced-Price***

If your family meets income eligibility requirements, your child may be able to receive free or reduced-price meals from the school cafeteria. While the district may be able to offer free meals to all students, it is very important for eligible parents to complete a meal benefits application because this data allows schools to get funding to provide other important educational resources to benefit students. Parents can complete a meal benefits application online at [myschoolapps.com](http://myschoolapps.com). Paper applications also are available at all schools. More: [www.wcpss.net/free-reduced-meals](http://www.wcpss.net/free-reduced-meals).

### ***Search and Seizure***

Schools must be safe and free of weapons, drugs and other contraband. School officials may search a student, student lockers, student automobiles or school computers under the circumstances outlined in Board Policy, and may seize any illegal, unauthorized or contraband materials discovered during the search. See Board Policy regarding Student Searches.

### ***School Resource Officers***

We partner with local law enforcement agencies to promote a safe learning environment through our School Resource

Officer program. Direct complaints or concerns about any School Resource Officer to [SROconcerns@wcpss.net](mailto:SROconcerns@wcpss.net) or 5625 Dillard Drive, Cary NC 27518.

### ***Seclusion, Restraint and Reasonable Force***

The use of seclusion, restraint and isolation of students is governed by N.C. General Statute 115C-391.1, Board Policy and Regulation & Procedures. To the extent allowed by these laws, policies and procedures, N.C. General Statute 115C-390.3 authorizes school personnel to use reasonable force to control behavior or remove a person from the scene when necessary to correct students, quell a disturbance threatening injury to others, obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects on the person or within the control of a student, act in self-defense or to protect other persons or property, or to maintain order on educational property, in the classroom or at a school-related activity on or off educational property. Also, see Board Policies regarding Code of Student Conduct and Seclusion and Restraint.

### ***Special Education***

We provide special education and related services to students identified with a disability according to the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and N.C. Public School Law, Article 9. If a parent suspects that their child has a disability or would like to receive additional information, parents of children who are ages three to those who are eligible to enter kindergarten should contact 919-431-7700. Parents of children in kindergarten through 12th grade should contact their child's school. They may also contact the district at 919-431-7334 or [facc@wcpss.net](mailto:facc@wcpss.net). (Spanish line: 919-431-7143). General information may be found at [www.wcpss.net/domain/107](http://www.wcpss.net/domain/107).

### ***Student Information in PowerSchool***

PowerSchool is a statewide student information system that gives parents and students access to real-time information including attendance, grades (middle and high school students only), transportation and school assignments. All students and parents have access to PowerSchool. For more information, visit [www.wcpss.net/pschool](http://www.wcpss.net/pschool).

### ***Student Preferred Name Request***

Families may contact the school to request a student be referred to by a preferred name rather than a legal name in some areas of our student information systems and digital platforms. Parental permission is required for students younger than 18. Once approved, the student's preferred name will replace the legal name on report cards, the

PowerSchool Student/Parent Portal, Teacher Gradebook, and other student-facing platforms. The student's legal name will still display on official student records.

### *Student Records and Directory Information*

A federal law known as FERPA provides parents and eligible students with rights to inspect and review the student's education records, to request amendments to such records, and to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education regarding an alleged FERPA violation. FERPA also provides that student records and personally identifiable information contained in those records generally may be released to third parties only if the parents or eligible students provide written consent. One of those exceptions to this requirement is that "directory information" about a student may be released to anyone upon request unless the parent or eligible student has opted out of the disclosure of such information. "Directory information" includes the student's name, grade, school most recently attended, dates of attendance, date of graduation, awards received and participation in officially recognized sports and activities. **Any parent, guardian or eligible student who does not want directory information released must notify the school in writing each year within 20 days of the receipt of this notice.** For additional information relating to FERPA and student records, including the criteria for determining which school officials may access a student's confidential information, please see Board Policy regarding Student Records.

### *Student Support Services*

Our guidance and counseling programs support students in their personal and social development and help them transition from school to higher education or a career. See Board Policy regarding the Counseling Program. Visit [www.wcpss.net/wellness](http://www.wcpss.net/wellness) for links to community resources and support information.

### *Student Surveys*

Our district sometimes partners with individuals and agencies conducting research. We review and approve or deny requests from individuals or agencies for any research project. Research can include surveys of staff or students. See Board Policy regarding Surveys of Students.

### *Students Experiencing Homelessness*

The McKinney-Vento Program is federal legislation that provides legal protection to children and youth experiencing a housing crisis. Contact the McKinney-Vento liaison at your child's school for more information. See Board Policy regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness.

### *Technology*

Except when permitted for instructional use by the teacher, no student may use a personal device (laptop, phone, tablet) during instructional hours. See Board Policies regarding Technology Responsible Use and Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected to comply with these policies when students use a school or personal device on school property, at school-sponsored events, on school-based transportation, or any time a personal device is connected to district technology resources. Any device used in violation of these policies will be confiscated and returned to the student's parents. See [www.wcpss.net/GuidesToTechnology](http://www.wcpss.net/GuidesToTechnology) for additional information. Parents and students can get technology assistance at [help.wcpss.net](http://help.wcpss.net) or 919-664-5700.

### *Volunteering in Your Child's School*

State law (N.C. General Statute 95-28.3) provides parents up to four hours of unpaid leave each year to volunteer in your child's school. All school volunteers must register and pass a criminal background check. Contact the volunteer coordinator at your child's school to register. See Board Policy regarding School Volunteers.

### *Weapons*

Students are not permitted to possess, handle or transmit any weapon, facsimile of a weapon, dangerous instrument/substance or other object that can reasonably be considered or used as a weapon or dangerous instrument/substance. See Board Policy regarding Weapons and Explosives Prohibited and Code of Student Conduct.

## STUDENT HEALTH

### *Cervical Cancer, Cervical Dysplasia and Human Papillomavirus*

N.C. General Statute 115C-47(51) requires school districts to provide information about cervical cancer, cervical dysplasia and human papillomavirus to parents and guardians of students in grades 5 through 12. Visit [www.wcpss.net/HPV](http://www.wcpss.net/HPV) or contact your school for more information.

### *COVID-19*

COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Older people and those who have certain underlying medical conditions are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. Vaccines against COVID-19 are safe and effective, so it is recommended that you discuss it with your student's physician. Information about COVID-19 may be found at [www.nc.gov/covid19](http://www.nc.gov/covid19).

To minimize the spread of COVID-19, the district adheres to all COVID-19 health measures required by the NC Department of Health and Human Services and consults with Wake County Public Health to determine what precautions are needed in our schools to keep our students, staff, and community healthy in a safe and welcoming environment. Visit [www.wcpss.net/covid19](http://www.wcpss.net/covid19) for more information.

### *Flu*

The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Symptoms include: fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. Avoid close contact with people who are sick, cover mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing, avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth and wash hands to protect from germs. It is important to stay at home when sick. The flu vaccine is generally effective in preventing cases of the flu, so it is recommended that the pros and cons of taking the vaccine be discussed with the student's physician. Information about the flu may be found at [www.immunize.nc.gov](http://www.immunize.nc.gov).

### *Garrett's Law*

Garrett's Law (Senate Bill 444) is a North Carolina statute enacted in 2004 that mandates that schools provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal meningitis, influenza, and the vaccines that protect against these diseases.

### *Lawful Abandonment of a Newborn Infant*

A parent may lawfully abandon an infant under seven days of age by voluntarily delivering the infant to one of the following: health care provider, law enforcement officer, social services worker, certified emergency medical services worker or any responsible adult. See N.C. General Statute 14-322.3 and 7B-500(b).

### *Medications at School*

Students may receive or self-administer medication at school when the medication is medically necessary for health or learning and must be taken during the school day. In some cases, a form may be required for a student to receive medication at school. Parents should contact the school for guidance. For more information, see the Board Policy regarding Administering Medications to Students or visit [www.wcpss.net/medications](http://www.wcpss.net/medications).

### *Meningococcal Meningitis*

Meningococcal meningitis is a respiratory illness with symptoms that may resemble the flu. Seek immediate medical care if your child develops fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, confusion, sleepiness and sensitivity to light. The Advisory Committee of Immunization Practices recommends vaccination for college-aged students. Information about meningococcal meningitis may be found at [www.immunize.nc.gov](http://www.immunize.nc.gov).

### *Notification of Health Conditions*

It is the parent's responsibility at the beginning of each school year to inform both their child's teacher and the school nurse if there are medical conditions that require special measures during the school day. Teachers are not responsible for communicating students' health-related information to nurses. School nurses are available for health consultation but are not present at the school on a daily basis.

### *Screenings*

Screenings are provided to students at certain grade levels or schools. Students at any grade with evidence of problems related to hearing, vision, dental, communicable disease or other learning issues will be screened or re-screened upon request. For more information, including the list of screenings students receive by grade level, visit [www.wcpss.net/screenings](http://www.wcpss.net/screenings). See Board Policy regarding Student Health Services.

## DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The Code of Student Conduct rules are leveled according to the severity of violation and type of consequence. In any given situation, based on the unique circumstances of a situation, the principal may utilize a different level of intervention than is indicated on the chart. Various interventions may be considered to address a student's behavior including restorative practices, detention, referrals to the counselor or community resources.

### *Level 1*

Level 1 rule violations can generally be addressed with non-disciplinary intervention or non-exclusionary discipline consequences. Except in the very limited circumstances described in a subsequent rule found in Level 1 and Level 2 rule violations may not result in out-of-school suspension.

Examples of a Level 1 rule violation are students not using appropriate language or students not complying with directives.

### *Level 2*

Level 2 rule violations involve more serious misconduct that may warrant a short-term suspension of up to five school days when, in the judgment of the principal or designee, non-disciplinary interventions and non-exclusionary discipline consequences are insufficient to address the behavior and prevent its recurrence. Principals may impose a short-term suspension of six to 10 days or recommend a long-term

suspension of 11 days or more based on one or more aggravating factors regarding the severity of the violation and/or safety concerns, provided such aggravating factor(s) are listed in the written suspension notice. Examples of a rule violation are fighting or theft.

### *Level 3*

Level 3 rule violations are more severe in nature and may support long-term suspension. The principal may impose a short-term suspension of 10 days or less or decline to impose any suspension based on mitigating factors. Examples of a violation are possession of a weapon or possession/use of narcotics, alcohol or other controlled substances.

### *Level 4*

The only rule in Level 4 is one that reflects a statutory prohibition on the possession of a firearm or destructive device (as defined in the rule) on school property or at a school-sponsored event. State law requires principals to recommend a 365 calendar-day suspension for all violations of this rule. Only the

Superintendent or Board of Education may modify this outcome. A Level 4 violation is always extremely serious and is treated as such.

### *Level 5*

Level 5 allows for expulsion of a student from the district for violation of one or more Level 2, 3 or 4 rules in the code of conduct if the following criteria are met: (1) the student is 14 years old or older; (2) both the principal and Superintendent/designee recommend expulsion; (3) the Superintendent and Board determine, consistent with the Board's "Due Process" policy, that there is a significant or important reason not to offer the student alternative education services and; (4) the Board determines, by clear and convincing evidence, that the students' continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other student or school staff.

The Student/Parent Handbook does NOT include all WCPSS discipline policies. Additional policies and information may be found online at [www.wcpss.net/handbook](http://www.wcpss.net/handbook).