

Student-Parent Handbook

Westside Middle School
Westside Community Schools

2023-2024 School Year

Westside Community Schools

School District 66
909 South 76th Street
Omaha, NE 68114
402.390.2100

Student Calendar 2023-24

July 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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August 2023

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September 2023

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November 2023

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December 2023

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January 2024

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February 2024

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March 2024

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April 2024

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May 2024

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June 2024

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Wednesday, August 2 – ALL Teachers and Staff Return (excluding LEA)

Thursday, August 10 – FIRST DAY of School for Students

Friday, September 1 – Professional Learning Day (No school)

Monday, September 4 – LABOR DAY (No School)

Thursday, October 12 – Parent-Teacher Communication (No school)

Friday, October 13 – No School

Monday, October 16 – Professional Learning Day (No school)

November 22-24 – Thanksgiving Break (No school)

Thursday, December 21 – Last School Day of 1st semester w/ early dismissal

•12:30 dismissal for WHS/West Campus

•12:45 dismissal for WMS

•1:00 dismissals for PreK-6th grade elementary buildings

Monday, January 8 – Students return and 2nd semester begins

Monday, January 15 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No school)

Friday, January 26 – Professional Learning Day (No school)

Monday, February 19 – Teacher Work Day (No school)

Tuesday, February 20 – Professional Learning Day (No school)

Thursday, March 14 – Parent-Teacher Communication (No school)

Friday, March 15 – No school

Friday, March 29 – Last School Day before Spring Break with early dismissal

•12:30 dismissal for WHS/West Campus

•12:45 dismissal for WMS

•1:00 dismissals for PreK-6th grade elementary buildings

April 1-5 – SPRING BREAK (No school)

Monday, April 29 – Professional Learning Day (No school)

Sunday, May 19 – GRADUATION

Friday, May 24 – LAST DAY OF SCHOOL with 12:00 dismissal
(District Celebration and Work Time)

 Students in School

Approved by Board of Education
11-7-22

FOREWORD.....	7
Intent of Handbook	7
Notice of Nondiscrimination	7
MISSION AND GOALS.....	8
District Mission Statement	8
Vision	8
Complaint Procedures	8
SCHOOL DAY.....	9
Daily Schedule.....	9
Communication	9
Severe Weather and School Cancellations	9
Arrival at School/Dismissal from School.....	9
Dropping Off/Picking Up Students	9
Closed Campus	9
Outdoor Activities.....	10
Signing a Student In and Out of School	10
Breakfast.....	10
Lunch.....	10
Free and Reduced-Priced Meal Program	10
Paying for Meals	10
À La Carte Items.....	11
Outside Food.....	11
Messages for Students	11
Parent Access to Students	11
Professional Learning and Collaboration.....	11
Emergency Procedures	11
ATTENDANCE	13
Attendance Policy	13
Student Absences	13
Chronic Absence.....	13
Absence Procedures	14
Absence Due to Illness	14
Accommodating Religious Observances	14
Preventing and Responding to Chronic Absence	14
Truancy	15

Make-up Work	15
Attendance Required to Participate in Activities	15
USE OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS	16
Visitors	16
Smoke-Free Environment	16
Care of School Property	16
Bringing/Sending Food to School.....	16
Textbooks	16
Lockers	16
Lab Safety Glasses	17
Student Valuables	17
Lost and Found	17
Bicycles.....	17
Skateboards	17
Non-Licensed Vehicles	17
Phones	17
Accidents at School.....	17
Insurance	17
Community Club.....	17
School Kitchen	17
Distribution of Flyers	18
School Resource Officer (SRO)	18
Video Surveillance	18
Searches	18
ACADEMICS	19
District Educational Competencies.....	19
Teams.....	19
Homeroom	19
Grading.....	20
Academic Organization.....	20
Homework.....	20
ZAP (Zeros Aren't Permitted)	21
Google Classroom	21
Report Cards.....	21
Parent-Teacher Conferences	21
PowerSchool and Monitoring Student Progress	21

Course Changes.....	21
Academic Honors	21
Binders & School Supplies	21
Bags	21
SUPPORT SERVICES.....	22
Enrollment Services	22
Health Services	23
Counseling Services	24
Student Assistance Program (SAP)	25
Students with Disabilities: Special Education.....	25
Students with Disabilities: Section 504.....	25
Transportation Services	25
Conduct While Using District Transportation	27
STUDENT RIGHTS, CONDUCT, RULES, AND REGULATIONS.....	29
Student Code of Conduct.....	29
Additional Rules and Expectations	34
Student Dress Code	34
Bullying, Harassment, and Retaliation	34
Dating Violence.....	35
Inappropriate Public Displays of Affection.....	35
Nuisance Items.....	35
Use of Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices.....	35
Network, Email, and Other Computer Rules.....	36
Reporting Student Law Violations	36
Removal of Students by Law Enforcement.....	36
In-School Suspension (ISS) Procedures	36
Restricted Lunch Procedures	37
Detentions Before or After School with a Teacher	37
Wednesday Night School	37
Saturday School	37
WESTSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS.....	38
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.....	39
Activities and Athletics	39
After School.....	39
WMS Athletic Opportunities	39
Student Fees Policy	39

<i>DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO.....</i>	<i>41</i>
Drug Free Schools.....	41
Education and Prevention	41
Standards of Student Conduct Pertaining to Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco.....	41
<i>STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>42</i>
Notice of Nondiscrimination	42
Notice to Parents of Rights Afforded by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	42
Notification of Rights Under FERPA.....	43
Notice Concerning Designation of Law Enforcement Unit.....	43
Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).....	43
Policy Regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness.....	44
Breakfast and Lunch Programs.....	45
Notice Concerning Staff Qualifications	47

FOREWORD

Intent of Handbook

This Handbook is intended for use by students, parents, and staff to serve as a guide to Westside Community Schools' rules and regulations. All students and parents are responsible for becoming familiar with the Handbook and knowing the information contained in it. Parents are encouraged to use this Handbook as a resource and to assist their children in following the rules contained in this Handbook.

Although the information found in this Handbook is detailed and specific on many topics, it is not intended to be so all-encompassing as to cover every situation and circumstance that may arise during any school day or school year. This Handbook does not create a contract. The District reserves to its administrators the right to make decisions and changes in rules and procedures at any time to implement the educational program and to assure the well-being of all students. Administrators are responsible for interpreting the rules contained in the Handbook. Should a situation or circumstance arise that is not specifically covered in this Handbook, the appropriate administrator(s) will make decisions based upon all applicable school district policies, and state and federal statutes and regulations.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Westside Community Schools does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, marital, parental or pregnancy status, military/veteran status or any other category protected by law in its programs and activities or in admission or access to, or treatment in, hiring and employment. Retaliation is prohibited. The following person(s) coordinate our compliance and can assist with questions or filing a concern or report:

For students, parents or other non-employees:

Coordinator of Student Services/Title IX Coordinator – ABC Building, 909 South 76th Street Omaha NE 68114 (402) 390-2100.

For further information about anti-discrimination laws or to file a complaint of discrimination you may also contact the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Dept. of Education, One Petticoat Lane, 1010 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor, Suite 320, Kansas City, MO 64106, Tele.(816) 268-0550, Fax (816) 268-0599, (TDD) (800) 877-8339, or ocr.kansascity@ed.gov.

MISSION AND GOALS

District Mission Statement

The mission of the Westside Community School District, as an innovative educational system, is to ensure academic excellence and to serve the unique needs of all learners.

Vision

Westside Community Schools will relentlessly pursue innovative educational ideals and promise to personalize learning for every student. We invite the challenge of developing a community of learners who embrace a broader, richer definition of success.

Complaint Procedures

General Complaints

Constructive criticism of the school or school system is welcome through any medium when it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program and to equip the school to perform its tasks more effectively.

In an effort to resolve all concerns and issues at the earliest stage and through informal methods and procedures, any complaint should first be addressed with the teacher or staff member involved.

1. When the teacher or staff member receives a complaint, he/she will immediately address the concerns by conducting an informal conference with the complainant, thereby providing an opportunity for a discussion and informal resolution of the identified concerns.
2. If the concerns are not resolved by the teacher or staff member, the complainant may contact the Principal, who will conduct an informal conference with the complainant, again providing an opportunity for a discussion and informal resolution of the complainant's concerns.
3. If the complainant's concerns are not resolved by the Principal, the complainant may contact the Director of Student Services, who will conduct an informal conference with the complainant, providing yet another opportunity for a discussion and informal resolution of the complainant's concerns.
4. If the complainant's concerns are not resolved by the head of Student Services, the complainant may contact the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and District Operations, who will conduct an informal conference with the complainant, thereby providing an opportunity for a discussion and informal resolution of the complainant's concerns and issues.

Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation

For information on how to report a concern about harassment, discrimination, or retaliation, see the **State and Federal Programs** chapter of this Handbook, Board Policy 7190, or the front page of the District website (westside66.org).

SCHOOL DAY

Daily Schedule

Start Time	8:00 a.m.
Dismissal Time	3:15 p.m. (2:44 p.m. every Wednesday)

Communication

Communicating with families is crucial; we use a variety of tools to keep parents informed about what's going on at school and to find out what parents are interested in or concerned about.

A crucial tool in ensuring good communication between home and school is the District's Back-to-School Update. For more information on the Back-to-School Update, please see the **Support Services** chapter of this Handbook.

Other Communication Tools

Our most common means of communication include

- telephone calls and voice mail
- parent meetings
- social media (primarily Facebook and Twitter)
- e-mail (lastname.firstname@westside66.net — example: doe.john@westside66.net)
- PowerSchool
- District website (westside66.org)

Severe Weather and School Cancellations

The Superintendent is authorized to dismiss school and school-related activities in the event of severe weather conditions, emergencies, or special school-sponsored events.

In the event of inclement weather, parents/guardians are responsible for deciding whether their children attend school.

Generally, school will not be dismissed during the school day because of inclement weather or other emergencies. If they wish, parents may come to the school and pick up their children. Generally, all school related activities involving students will also be cancelled when school is dismissed due to severe weather.

If severe weather forces the closing of school, an announcement will be made on local radio/TV stations, and parents who have signed up for notifications will receive an automated phone message, usually by 6:30 a.m.

Arrival at School/Dismissal from School

Students should arrive at school no earlier than 7:30 a.m. unless prior arrangements have been made with the school. Prior to that time, the school is not responsible for supervision of students. Unless they have a pass from a teacher, students who arrive between 7:30 a.m. and 7:50 a.m. should enter through the Performing Arts Center doors and are required to wait in either the gymnasium or cafeteria until 7:50 a.m.

Students are dismissed at the end of the last period of the school day unless circumstances dictate otherwise (early dismissal, detention, school emergency, etc.). Upon dismissal, students must leave school grounds by 3:30 p.m. and proceed home or to a previously designated location unless they are involved in a supervised school activity or meeting with a teacher.

Students who remain on school property after 3:30 p.m. and are not involved in an organized, school-sanctioned activity must be working in the media center or with an individual teacher. The school is not responsible for supervision of students once students are to have left school grounds.

Dropping Off/Picking Up Students

Please observe the "No Parking" signs along the west side of the school. Even quick stops should be made in a spot outside the No Parking Zone. To avoid a crowded parking lot, parents may wish to make arrangements to pick students up a few blocks away from school. Drivers may not stop or park in the bus loading zone of the circle in front of the school. Parents are reminded that Arbor Street is one way, eastbound from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on school days to decrease the risks for both students and drivers.

Closed Campus

All students are required to remain on campus in the building during the school day.

Outdoor Activities

Certain instructional activities may be held outdoors, except when extended exposure to the elements is inadvisable or when the Principal determines it to be otherwise unsafe. In the absence of other mitigating circumstances, outdoor activities will not be conducted when either the air temperature or Wind Chill Factor is 10°F or lower, or when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is 101 degrees or higher, as reported by the Environmental Protection Agency (airnow.gov).

Signing a Student In and Out of School

Students are required to sign in and out of school if they are entering after 8:00 a.m. or leaving prior to dismissal. The sheet for signing a child in and/or out of school is located in the main office. If a child is being signed out unexpectedly, WMS staff will call the appropriate classroom and indicate to the teacher that the child is leaving. Parents are not to go directly to classrooms.

Students who leave before the end of the day must be signed out by a parent, guardian or other party designated by the parent or guardian. Parents or guardians requesting their children only be released to a specific person after dismissal must submit a completed written request to the Principal.

Breakfast

Breakfast is served in the cafeteria from 7:30 a.m. until 7:50 a.m. daily for all interested middle school students. Because of the early morning departure and since many middle schoolers tend to skip breakfast, they will often arrive at school with empty stomachs. Studies have conclusively demonstrated that food is necessary for the brain to function and the body to stay alert. Breakfast is the most critical meal of the day since it breaks the fast of the entire night. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to do whatever they can to ensure that their children eat breakfast each day.

Lunch

Lunch is offered daily in the cafeteria from 10:55 a.m. to 1:18 p.m. The cafeteria serves meals that follow USDA Guidelines under the School Breakfast Program (SBP), School Lunch Program (NSLP), and federal Smart Snacks guidelines. Service includes made-from-scratch items, farm-to-school produce, and a variety of cuisine from American comfort food to international choices. Free and reduced pricing is available for those that qualify.

The following rules assure the continued smooth operation and safety of our customers:

- Students are responsible for knowing their current account balances.
- Service areas are subject to video surveillance.
- Customers should touch only food that they intend to purchase.
- Taking food without paying for it is considered theft. Violators will be reported and face consequences.
- Food is not to be consumed until paid for.
- Appropriate and respectful behavior is always expected.
- Food should not be taken from the cafeteria.
- Students may not purchase food for other students.

Free and Reduced-Priced Meal Program

Forms and guidelines for free or reduced lunch are available to any student. Parents will be notified if they are eligible after an application has been filed. Students who received free or reduced lunch last year, in our district, automatically qualify for the same status during the first week of school. To continue receiving free or reduced lunch, parent(s) must fill out a new application form and return it to the school secretary the first week of school. More information on this program is available in the **State and Federal Programs** chapter of this Handbook.

Paying for Meals

Students are encouraged to debit their food purchases against prepaid accounts in their name. Online deposits can be made 24/7 by credit/debit card or check at myschoolbucks.com. In-person deposits can be made by cash or check from 7:00 a.m.- 8:00 a.m. in the cafeteria and during the lunch hour, after all students have gone through the lunch line. Checks should be made payable to "Westside Nutrition Services."

No student will go without lunch. In cases where students do not have money for lunch, a regular meal will be provided and appropriate arrangements will be made with parents or guardians at a later time. Detailed information is provided in the **State and Federal Programs** chapter of this Handbook.

Students may not use their accounts to pay for other students' lunches.

À La Carte Items

A variety of à la carte food items such as cookies, chips, ice cream, juice, etc., are offered daily during lunch. Prices range from 25¢ to \$1.35. This is in addition to the cost of a regular lunch. À la carte and ice cream may be purchased out of the student's prepaid account.

Outside Food

Students are not permitted to bring in food from outside vendors during school hours.

Messages for Students

From time to time it may be necessary for parents/guardians to get a message to their child. Parents are urged to confine this practice to messages that cannot wait until after school. Parents should contact the main office rather than texting their child.

Parent Access to Students

Both parents are presumed by the school to have equal rights in educational matters, and both parents will, unless otherwise determined by the District, be allowed to:

- Visit the child at school (classroom/school activities, volunteering, lunch)
- Be contacted by the school when the child is sick at school or has some other need
- Pick up the child during the day (such as for illness, medical appointments, emergency dismissals, etc.)
- Pick up the child at the end of the school day
- Attend parent-teacher conferences
- Receive copies of school mailings, grades and educational records

If one parent wishes to request that another parent not be allowed one or more of the above rights, he or she must notify the building principal and provide a court order or other legal document specifically restricting the other parent's rights to do South

The school will review any information submitted and make a determination as to whether the other parent's rights have been legally restricted. Both parents shall continue to have equal access until a review of the legal documents has been conducted and a determination made.

Professional Learning and Collaboration

The District emphasizes the importance of staff development and believes that the mission of the Office of Professional Learning is to improve learning for all students by increasing staff effectiveness through ongoing, research-based opportunities for growth and renewal. All employees are expected to engage in courses, programs and activities leading to their professional growth, expansion of skills, and improved job performance.

Westside Community Schools provides Professional Learning Collaboration days set aside to provide opportunities to focus on district, building, and individual teacher goals. Dates designated as Professional Learning Days are listed in the calendar that is part of this Handbook. Additionally, students are dismissed at 2:44 p.m. on Wednesdays, so that teachers can participate in Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings.

Emergency Procedures

Westside staff and students are trained to respond to emergencies by following the Standard Response Protocol (SRP). SRP has been adopted by most school districts and law enforcement agencies in Douglas and Sarpy County in an effort to develop common terminology and procedures to maximize the effectiveness of our response to school emergencies.

SRP involves just five responses: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuation, and Shelter.

Hold requires all students to stay in their classroom due to a situation that requires the hallway to be cleared. Classes go on as usual. Useful for medical emergencies or any reason to restrict movement within the building.

Secure is called when one or more persons or animals outside the school pose a potential threat to student safety. The school day proceeds as usual, but students are kept inside the building until the potential threat has passed.

Lockdown is called when there is someone or something inside the building that poses an immediate threat to student safety. Teachers verify that classroom doors are locked and that students are moved to a location in the classroom where they cannot be seen from interior hallways.

Evacuation occurs when conditions inside the building require that all students be moved out of the building. The most common form of evacuation drill is a fire drill, but students might be evacuated for other reasons, such as a gas leak or damage to the building. If students are unable to be in the building for an extended period or due to extreme weather, students will be moved to a designated temporary evacuation site or to a reunification site where they can be safely released to a parent or guardian.

Shelter requires that all students go to a designated location inside the building designed to withstand severe thunderstorms or tornados.

Students and staff practice these responses throughout the year in an attempt to ensure that all students and staff know what to do and to identify plan elements that may need attention. Except for drills, parents are notified any time conditions warrant the activation of these protocols.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance Policy

Students are considered to have good attendance if they are present for 95 percent of the days that school is in session. To reach 95 percent attendance, a student can miss no more than nine days per year, or about one day per month. Good attendance is crucial to getting the most out of the educational opportunities offered by the school. Researchers have found a close connection between student attendance and academic performance, and there is evidence that students with good school attendance encounter greater success in adulthood.

State law and Board Policy mandate that every person who has legal or actual charge or control of any child between the ages of six and eighteen shall cause such child to attend regularly each day school is open unless illness or severe weather conditions make attendance impossible. State statutes also require school staff to render all services in their power to compel the unlawfully absent child to attend school. If the Principal believes a child is unlawfully absent from school, he or she shall immediately investigate and take action when necessary.

Student Absences

Excused and Unexcused Absences

An absence from school will be recorded by the school as Excused or Unexcused.

1. Excused Absences. Excused absences are those deemed by the Principal or designee to be obligatory, unavoidable, or part of the school's educational program. Absences should be cleared through the Principal's office in advance whenever possible. All absences, except for illness and/or death in the family, require approval in advance. An absence for any of the following reasons shall generally be excused, provided the required procedures have been followed:
 - a. Personal Illness (a physician's verification may be required after four consecutive days of absence for illness).
 - b. Medical or dental appointments which require the student's absence from school.
 - c. Death or serious illness of a family member of the student.
 - d. Attending a funeral.
 - e. Observance of religious holidays.
 - f. Legal matters which require the student's absence from school.
 - g. School-sponsored events that require the student's absence from school.
 - h. Family trips in which student accompanies parent(s)/legal guardian(s).
 - i. College planning visits (high school only).
 - j. Other absences that have received prior approval of the Principal.

The Principal retains the discretion to deny approval for any of the foregoing reasons, depending on circumstances such as the student's absence record, the student's academic status, the tests or other projects that may be missed.

2. Unexcused Absences. An absence, even with parental approval, may be unexcused. If a student's absence is unexcused, the student may be required to make up work and time missed.

Tardy

1. Tardy to School. Arriving at school on time is very important. Students who are tardy to school must check in at the main office. When a student is tardy three times in a quarter, the student's parent/guardian will be notified. If a fourth tardy is earned in the quarter, an administrator will issue a consequence.
2. Late to Class. Students will be considered tardy to class if they are not seated in their assigned seats or ready and attentive in their assigned areas when the bell rings to signal the start of the class period. Westside Middle School uses the *START on Time* program. This program includes a continuum of consequences that will be communicated to students and parents.

Chronic Absence

Students are considered chronically absent when they miss school ten percent of the days that school is in session, **regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused**. That equals 18 days per year, or just two days per month. Students who are chronically absent—especially in the early grades—fall behind their peers and often struggle with reading and math into their teenage and adult years. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their children are in school every day, except when a child's illness makes attendance inadvisable.

Absence Procedures

Notifying the School of Student Absence

When a student does not appear at school, building staff make extensive efforts to verify that student's whereabouts and well-being. Parents are requested to call the school office or voicemail before 8:30 a.m. to report the absence of their child(ren).

In addition to requirements listed above, to be excused, all absences must be verified through a note, email, or phone call from the child's parent or guardian. Absences that are not verified by parents/guardians within three school days will be permanently recorded as Unexcused.

Counting Absences

For state reporting purposes, attendance is taken each class period. Each period missed is counted in proportion to its share of the school day.

Absence Due to Illness

Parents should keep children home whenever a child has a temperature greater than 100.0°F, is vomiting, or has diarrhea. Students should not return to school until they have been free of those symptoms—unassisted by medication—for 24 hours.

While attendance is important, keeping a sick child at home can protect the well-being of the child, other students, and our staff, and can help limit the spread of illness in the community.

Accommodating Religious Observances

One important feature of a welcoming school environment is a staff that deals sensitively with students who are absent from school for religious holidays. Even when they are allowed to make up missed work, such students often encounter intangible disadvantages that can affect their opportunities for success. Therefore, teachers are expected to plan instruction so as to avoid conflicts that leave students feeling torn between their school and religious obligations.

Because the dates of holidays are known well in advance, teachers will not, as a rule, schedule high-value exams, assignment due dates, or presentations of crucial material or activities when students will be absent for religious observances. Exceptions must be approved, in advance, by the building principal, and the teacher is required to provide reasonable accommodations that allow students to catch up on the missed information tests, assignments, and activities.

Preventing and Responding to Chronic Absence

In an attempt to minimize chronic absence, the Principal will act in the following progression:

Five Days of Absence

In cases where illness is not a primary factor, the building principal shall notify the parent, guardian, or individual who has legal or actual charge or control of a child when the child has accumulated five days (or the hourly equivalent of five days) of either excused or unexcused absences for the school year.

Ten Days of Absence

When a child has accumulated ten days (or the hourly equivalent of ten days) of either excused or unexcused absences for the school year, the building principal, designated school staff, the parent or guardian, and the student will cooperatively develop a plan of action designed to overcome barriers preventing regular attendance. The result of such meeting(s) shall be to develop a collaborative plan to reduce barriers identified to improve regular attendance.

If, despite multiple efforts by the District to contact parents/guardians via telephone, email, or personal contact, the parent or guardian cannot be reached or refuses to participate with school staff in establishing the child's attendance plan, the child's SAT Team shall develop the plan.

Fifteen Days of Absence

Once an attendance plan has been established, District personnel shall continue to monitor the child's attendance and adjust the attendance plan as needed. The principal shall inform the parent(s)/guardian in writing if the child accumulates additional absences totaling fifteen days for the school year.

Referral to the County Attorney

The county attorney may be involved at any stage in the process of addressing excessive absenteeism. If, despite documented efforts made by District personnel to improve attendance, the student accumulates more than twenty days of unexcused absence (or its hourly equivalent) for the school year, the Principal may file a report with the county attorney. A documented illness that makes attendance impossible or impracticable shall not be the basis for referral to the county attorney.

Truancy

Students who accumulate unexcused absences may be considered truant. Truancy is a violation of school rules and subjects violators to measures specified in the Code of Conduct, as well as potential referral to the County Attorney.

Make-up Work

Students may be required to make up all work missed during absences. Students who are absent two or more consecutive days should request make-up work by contacting the school no later than 10:00 a.m.

In general, two school days will be allowed to make up work for each day missed. When there is an absence of long duration, the teacher may adjust expectations, as he or she deems appropriate.

Attendance Required to Participate in Activities

Students must be in attendance for at least half the school day to participate in extracurricular activities or other school programs that day. Absences for school-sponsored events are not included. Failure to attend will result in a student being withheld from participation in the activity. The Principal may grant participation in exceptional circumstances.

USE OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Visitors

For the safety of all students and staff, all visitors, including parents, are required to enter the building through the administrative hallway, sign in at the main office, and wear a visitor's badge for the duration of the visit.

Parents

Parent visits to school during the school day must be balanced against the District's responsibility to control school property, maintain order, and foster a safe and appropriate learning environment for students and staff. The Principal shall have the discretion to limit access when it is determined that such access may interfere with any of these responsibilities.

School-Age Guests

Students are not permitted to bring school-age visitors to school.

Smoke-Free Environment

All Westside Community Schools buildings and grounds are smoke-free and tobacco-free. All who attend school events, including athletic contests, are expected to abide by the District's policy.

The Student Code of Conduct prohibits the use or possession of any form of tobacco, tobacco or nicotine delivery device, or tobacco-product look-alike, e-cigarette or vapor ("vape") dispenser of any kind regardless of the substance, if any, that it contains. Students found to have violated this provision will face disciplinary consequences.

Care of School Property

Students are responsible for the proper care of all books, equipment, supplies, and furniture supplied by the school. Students who disfigure property, break windows, or otherwise damage school property or equipment will be required to pay for the damage done or replace the item.

As a matter of routine, students should

- pick up their own trash and the trash around them.
- recycle paper, pop cans, and plastic bottles whenever possible.
- not carry open containers of pop or other liquids in the hallways, except water.
- not consume food in hallways and classrooms, unless with teacher permission.

Bringing/Sending Food to School

Westside Community Schools promotes student wellness and safety by monitoring food provided at school for student consumption. To minimize the risk of exposing students to potentially harmful foods or allergens, any items other than those brought by students for their own consumption must be commercially prepared. In no case may homemade goods be shared or distributed for student consumption. Students or parents who have questions about these guidelines should consult with a building administrator before bringing or sending any food item to school.

Textbooks

For some courses, the school lends textbooks to students. Students should keep school textbooks covered, clean and protected, as students must return them at the end of the semester or school year. Students are expected to provide their own book covers.

The school may fine students up to the full cost of the textbook if there is abnormal wear or damage to any textbook lent to a student. Fines may also be assessed for lost or stolen textbooks. For the purpose of calculating fines, books are assumed to have a life of five years. Therefore, the replacement cost of a text is reduced by 20% from the original purchase price for each year of up to five years. For the fifth year (and any year thereafter), the fine will equal 20% of the purchase price of the lost or destroyed book.

Lockers

All students are assigned a locker. Students are expected to use their own lockers and should not share lockers, except as assigned by school staff. Students should keep their own belongings, along with books and other materials, in their assigned lockers. Students are also responsible for the cleanliness of their lockers, both inside and out, and may be assessed a fine for damage to lockers. These expectations also apply to P.E. lockers.

Lab Safety Glasses

As required by law, approved safety glasses will be required of every student and teacher while participating in or observing vocational, technical, industrial technology, science, and art classes. All visitors to these areas must check out and wear a pair of safety glasses when entering any of these areas.

Student Valuables

The District is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items brought to school by students. Students are encouraged to leave items of value at home. This includes, but is not limited to, cellphones, wireless headphones, money, and jewelry.

Lost and Found

The school maintains a collection of Lost and Found items in the main office. Students who lose a textbook, sweatshirt, purse, or anything else should check the Lost and Found for the missing item. Due to the difficulty of maintaining a large Lost and Found collection, it is cleaned out at the end of each quarter, and unclaimed items are donated to charity.

Bicycles

Students are allowed to ride bicycles to and from school. Bicycles may not be ridden on campus; they should be walked whenever on District property. Because of heavy traffic near schools, students should be especially observant of safety rules. Students should keep their bicycles locked in the bike racks provided. Neither the school nor the District is responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged bicycles.

Skateboards

Skateboarding is not permitted on school grounds.

Non-Licensed Vehicles

Non-licensed, motorized vehicles (go-peds, go-carts, mini-bikes, etc.) are not permitted on school grounds.

Phones

Telephones are placed in each classroom. Students may not use classroom phones without teacher approval.

Accidents at School

The District does not provide health insurance coverage for students, as that is the responsibility of parents/guardian to provide. Parents are responsible for the medical bills, just as they would be if the student were hurt away from school.

Insurance

At the beginning of the school year, parents may enroll in an insurance program that covers a child traveling to and from school, within school buildings or grounds, and attending school-sponsored activities. Premiums for policies under this program are paid by the parent(s)/guardian.

Community Club

Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. One way to be involved is by joining the Westside Middle School Community Club. Community Club meetings are open to all parents and begin at 6:30 p.m. Parents who would like to be involved with the Community Club should fill out an interest indicator at the start of the school year.

School Kitchen

To protect equipment, prevent injury and prevent cross-contamination of food preparation areas, school kitchens may not be used for any purpose unless under the direct supervision of a District Nutrition Services staff member. Due to state and federal regulations, there can be no exceptions to this policy.

Distribution of Flyers

Digital Distribution

Organizing and distributing thousands of flyers for external organizations in our schools each week is both labor-intensive and costly. Starting with the 2017-18 school year, Westside Community Schools moved to an all-digital system for distributing information from external organizations. Information is made available on the District website (westside66.org) and distributed electronically by schools at each principal's discretion. Distribution of flyers for District-related events is permitted. There is no charge to display electronic versions of flyers on the District website.

Flyer Booklet Distribution

To help inform all students and families about external organizations' activities and events, Westside Community Schools distributes activities booklets twice a year to all elementary school students—one in August and one in January. Organizations wishing to include a flyer in these booklets must meet certain requirements (see below), and all flyers must be approved by the Director of Communication and Engagement. Organizations submitting flyers for booklet distribution are charged fees to cover costs.

Guidelines for Inclusion in Flyer Booklet

- Organization distributing flyers must be a registered non-profit in the state of Nebraska
- Organization must submit an 8.5×11 file of flyer in PDF format via email (Please send to paul.brandi@westside66.net)
- Cost per flyer, per booklet, is \$100 (\$125 for 2-sided flyers). Flyer will also be posted on the Westside Community Schools website.
- Submission deadline for inclusion in August flyers booklet is July 1. The deadline for the January booklet is December 1.

School Resource Officer (SRO)

School resource officers (SROs) are police officers who work directly in the schools. They are responsible for working with school administrators, security staff and faculty on developing and implementing comprehensive safety plans to ensure schools are safe places for students to learn. Westside Community Schools has two SROs, who are shared with Westside Middle School and Westside High School, as part of a collaboration with the Omaha Police Department. Westside SROs also provide support and service to our Elementary buildings, as needed. The purpose of an SRO is to assist school officials in maintaining discipline, order, safety, and a proper educational environment. The SROs are also an educational resource for teachers and students.

Video Surveillance

The Board of Education has authorized the use of video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District facilities and equipment. Video cameras may be used in locations deemed appropriate by the Building and District administrators.

Notice is hereby given that video surveillance may occur on District property. In the event a video surveillance recording captures a student or other building user violating school policies or rules or local, state or federal laws, the video surveillance recording may be used in disciplinary proceedings against the student or other building user and may also be provided to law enforcement agencies.

Searches

The school exercises exclusive control over school property including, but not limited to, student lockers, desks, computer equipment, and other such property owned by the school. Students should not expect privacy when using school property. Periodic, random searches of lockers, desks, computers, and other such property may be conducted at the discretion of the Principal.

The following rules apply to searches of students and a student's personal property, and to the seizure of items in a student's possession or control:

1. School officials may conduct a search if there is a reasonable basis to believe that the search will uncover evidence of a crime or a school rule violation. The search is to be conducted in a reasonable manner under the circumstances.
2. Illegal items or other items reasonably determined to be a threat to the safety of others or a threat to educational purposes may be taken and kept by school officials. Any firearm or other weapon will be confiscated and delivered to law enforcement officials as soon as practicable.
3. Items which have been or are reasonably expected to be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process (that is, "nuisance items") may be removed from student possession.

ACADEMICS

District Educational Competencies

Westside Community Schools students are expected to exhibit the skills and talents listed below upon graduation. From Kindergarten through 6th grade and continuing through middle school and high school, Westside's teaching and learning programs are designed to help all students to meet and exceed these expectations.

1. Effective Communicator
 - a. Writes and speaks clearly and articulately
 - b. Exchanges ideas and information through multiple forms of expression
 - c. Works collaboratively with others
 - d. Actively listens
2. Engaged Citizen
 - a. Respects self and others equally
 - b. Exhibits ethical and honest behaviors
 - c. Practices and values democratic ideals
 - d. Demonstrates an understanding of the interconnectedness of the global community
3. Critical and Creative Thinker
 - a. Creatively develops solutions to problems
 - b. Applies reason and analysis to make informed decisions
 - c. Employs resources appropriate to the task
4. Healthy Individual
 - a. Cultivates healthy habits and self-discipline
 - b. Accepts responsibility for personal choices, actions, and mistakes
 - c. Maintains healthy interpersonal relationships
 - d. Perseveres in the face of challenge and adversity
5. Lifelong Learner
 - a. Takes intellectual risks and displays curiosity for learning
 - b. Develops personal, academic and technical skills to adapt to change
 - c. Initiates and engages in learning

Teams

All Westside Middle School students are organized into teams or small communities of learning. These teams are composed of teachers in core subject areas (English, Math, Social Studies and Science) and are supported by special education staff, a guidance counselor, and an administrator. Team teachers meet regularly to coordinate and plan activities or lessons, to discuss ways in which education can be most meaningful for each child, and to maximize instructional effectiveness.

Homeroom

Students need to feel connected in positive ways to the goals and purposes of their school. Every student should be well known as a person by at least one caring adult in the school—someone who can be an advocate and trusted adult for the student.

Homeroom is an advisor/advisee program designed to help build meaningful relationships between students and teachers. Students are assigned to a homeroom class at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of homeroom is to:

- help students make friends and develop positive peer group relationships and a sense of belonging.
- provide orientation to WMS and the Student Handbook.
- teach, reinforce, and build character as a middle school student working together with our classroom community.
- encourage students to develop a sense of academic purpose and personal commitment to educational goals.
- help students achieve academic success by developing organization skills, time management skills, effective study habits, and academic support.
- develop the skills, attitudes and behaviors that will help students function productively.
- reinforce the values of respect, responsibility, personal safety and accountability through character development activities.

Grading

Westside Middle School uses a traditional grading scale for all courses.

As a learner working to achieve success in the classroom, it is the student's responsibility to:

- Stay informed and use PowerSchool and Google Classroom.
- Visit with teachers about their availability to meet outside of class time.
- Remember that learning takes effort both in and outside of class time.

All assessments given by teachers will be either Formative or Summative.

- Formative assessments allow teachers to monitor student learning. The results are used to make ongoing instructional decisions and give students feedback to monitor their learning.
- Summative assessments allow teachers to evaluate student learning at the end of teaching to an objective or at the end of a unit of study. The results are used to make judgments about student mastery of content standards.

Teachers will base 80% of a student's final grade on summative (formal) assessments and 20% of a student's final grade on formative (informal) assessments.

WMS Grading Scale	
Letter Grade	Pct. Range
A+	97-100
A	90-96
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

Academic Organization

All middle school students are given an assignment notebook and are expected to keep it completed daily. Parents can help their children by monitoring the completion of assignment books and the assignments listed. Students must have their name, class schedule, and homeroom teacher on the inside front cover or first pages of their Assignment Notebook.

Benefits of Academic Organization		
Students	Teachers	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All homework assignments are recorded. • Grades will most likely improve. • Establish a process of planning, prioritizing, and goal setting. • Establish school-wide consistency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure students record assignment(s). • Increase student accountability. • Increase home-school communication. • Establish school-wide consistency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of homework assignments. • Increase home-school communication. • Increase parent-child communication.

Homework

Purposeful homework is an essential component of the instructional process in the Westside Community Schools. The purposes of homework are: (1) to help in the development of independent work procedures and study habits; (2) to aid in the acquisition of knowledge; (3) to assist in the mastery of skills; and (4) to encourage creative effort and pursuit of individual interests. Homework should provide reinforcement and extension of class instruction and should serve as a basis for further study and preparation for future class assignments.

Most middle school students should average from one to two hours of homework per night. Parents are asked to support their children's success by:

- establishing homework as a top priority for their children.
- making sure there is a quiet environment for doing homework.
- establishing a daily homework time.
- providing positive support when homework is completed.
- not allowing children to neglect homework.
- monitoring completion of the assignment notebook.
- contacting the teacher if the child is having difficulty with the homework or not completing it on time.
- insisting that children work with a teacher before or after school, if needed.

ZAP (Zeros Aren't Permitted)

ZAPs are assigned if students come to class without their homework/coursework or without the work being complete to teacher standards. ZAP can be assigned before school (student will be given pass by the assigning teacher), during lunches (student will go to cafeteria to get lunch first and then go to assigned location), and after school (student will be given a pass to get on bus, when applies). When students are ZAPPED by a teacher:

- They should arrive and be in the assigned room by the time the tone rings or is designated on the ZAP Pass. A consequence may be assigned to students who are late.
- The assigning teacher and student will contact parent(s)/guardian(s) when ZAP is assigned by phone or email.
- Students who are assigned multiple ZAPS in a day will need to schedule times with teachers in the order the ZAPS are received.
- Students who fail to complete their assigned ZAP time or fail to attend their ZAP will be contacted by the dean and parents will be called.

Google Classroom

Students will access Google Classroom for coursework and homework. It is suggested that students bookmark this website on their school computers for easy access.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued following the end of each quarter and distributed by email to the email address(es) on file for the parent(s) or guardian.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held at the end of 1st and 3rd quarters. Please check the calendar for specific conference dates. Parents/guardians are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Other conferences may be scheduled as needed by a teacher or parents/guardians.

PowerSchool and Monitoring Student Progress

The Westside Community Schools uses the PowerSchool student information system to maintain education records for each student. Using their individual PowerSchool accounts, parents can monitor student progress in specific courses or content areas, view attendance records, and check lunch balances. PowerSchool helps parents keep up with what's going on at school and can serve as a starting point for ongoing conversation between parent and child.

Parents who don't know their login information may request that information by sending an email to powerschool.support@westside66.net. Children's name(s) must accompany all requests.

Course Changes

Parents/Guardians who believe a course change is necessary for their child should contact their child's counselor. Elective course changes are not permitted after the eighth school day of the semester.

Academic Honors

WMS doesn't have an honor roll, but we do recognize academic excellence in two ways. First, students earning a first semester GPA are invited to apply to the WMS chapter of National Junior Honor Society. Additionally, students earning a 3.5/4.0 are eligible for both the President's Award for Educational Excellence and the President's Award for Academic Achievement.

Binders & School Supplies

Because students will be carrying materials to and from school and between classes at school, they are encouraged to use a folder to organize, store, and transport important school papers between classes as well as to and from school. Supplies students will need for school are folders, notebook paper, and pencils/pens. Teachers will notify students and parents in the first few days of school if they need any other specific supplies for a particular class.

Bags

Backpacks and drawstring bags are allowed to be worn or kept in lockers during school hours.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Enrollment Services

Returning Student Registration

Parents must complete the Returning Student Registration for each of their children every year, to verify that the school has current address and contact information, to update each student's health information, and to provide families with information about programs and services offered by the school. The Update is made available for completion in mid-July and should be completed by parents before the first day of school. Because the Update includes technology agreement forms, **students will not receive school-issued technology devices until the student's parent/guardian has completed and submitted his or her Returning Student Registration.** Parents with questions about the online forms may contact their building secretary or the Welcome Center (powerschool.support@westside66.net).

Change of Address and Emergency Contact Information

In situations where a student or parent's home address OR emergency contact information changes after completing the Returning Student Registration, parents should inform the Welcome Center (enrollment@westside66.net or 402-390-2100) no later than five days after the change occurs.

Birth Certificate Requirement

State law requires that a *certified* copy of a student's birth certificate be provided within 30 days of enrollment in a Nebraska school for the first time. Parents/guardians may obtain a certified copy from the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state in which the child was born. Assistance in obtaining birth certificates may be obtained from Health Records Management, P.O. Box 95065, Lincoln, NE 68509-5065. There is a per-certificate fee.

If a birth certificate is unavailable, other reliable proof of a student's identity may be used. These documents could include naturalization or immigration documents showing date of birth or official hospital birth records, a passport, or a translation of a birth certificate from another country. The documents must be accompanied by an affidavit explaining the inability to produce a copy of the birth certificate.

Please note: Documents parents often receive from the hospital may look like a birth certificate, but it is not a *certified* copy. A certified copy has a raised seal of the issuing state on it and is signed by the appropriate state official.

Health Services

Health Office

Each school Health Office operates under the supervision of the Principal and a registered nurse contracted from Children's Hospital and Medical Center. Each Health Office is also staffed by a Health Assistant. Students who become ill, are injured, or develop some other health concern at school should report to the Health Office. The School Nurse and/or Health Assistant will assess the student's condition and contact parents regarding next steps.

Parents should notify the School Nurse or Health Assistant of any health concerns or changes in their child's health status. Students should contact their parents about a health concern from the Health Office, not the classroom. Parents may call the Health Office at any time with questions or concerns at 402-408-8652.

Student Illnesses

Office personnel will notify parents/guardian when a student needs to be sent home from school due to illness. Conditions requiring a student be sent home include: temperature greater than 100.0°F, vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained rashes, or on determination by the school nurse that the child's condition prevents meaningful participation in the educational program, presents a health risk to the child or others, or that medical consultation is warranted unless the condition resolves. Students should not return to school until they have been free of those symptoms—unassisted by medication—for 24 hours.

Parents should complete the online Back-to-School Update each year to verify that emergency daytime phone numbers are current so that parents can be reached if their child becomes ill or is injured while at school. Parents should also inform the School Nurse or Health Assistant of health-related information they feel is important for each child's safety and success at school.

Medication at School

Medication should be brought into school only when it is not possible to arrange administration outside of school hours. All unexpired prescription and over-the-counter medications, including medicated creams, eye drops, eardrops, herbal products, and cough drops, must be provided to the school by the parent/guardian in the pharmacy- or manufacturer-labeled container. Repackaged and expired medications will not be accepted.

Students are not permitted to keep any type of medication with them; all medication must be kept in the health office. The only exception is for students who must carry an inhaler for asthma, in which case a parent/guardian must submit written verification from a physician that the student is able to self-carry and self-manage.

A medication authorization form must be completed for any medication taken at school. These may be obtained from the Health Office or on the school website in the Health section. The physician portion of the form must be completed for any non-prescription medication that may be needed at school for more than two weeks and for prescription medications needed for any length of time. The amount of medication provided to the school should not, at any time, exceed a two-week supply.

Health Screening

Children in grades K through 4, as well as children in 10th grade, are screened for vision, hearing, dental defects, height and weight. Students entering the Student Assistance Program (SAP) at any grade level, and those about whom health concerns are identified to the school nurse may also be screened. Parents who do not wish their child to participate in the school screening program must communicate this in writing to the school health office at the start of the school year. Because Nebraska statutes require school-age screening, parents who remove their children from the screening program must submit to the school, by December 1, either findings from an alternate medical provider or a letter from a physician stating that the student has been seen within the immediately preceding six months.

Physical and Vision Examination

Evidence of a physical examination and a vision evaluation is required within six (6) months prior to entrance into kindergarten and, in the case of transfer from out of state, to any other grade. A physical examination is also required prior to entrance into the seventh grade. The physical examination is to be completed by a physician, a physician's assistant, or an advanced practice registered nurse; the vision evaluation is to be completed by any of the foregoing or an optometrist. A parent or guardian who objects to the physical examination and/or vision evaluation may submit a written statement of refusal for his or her child. Waiver forms are available in the school health office, at the Westside Welcome Center, and on the school website in the Health section. Additional physical examination requirements exist for students participating in athletic participation.

Immunizations

Parents/guardians must show proof of a child's immunization to enroll that child in school. Students whose parents/guardians do not comply with immunization requirements will not be permitted to continue in school. Parents/guardians of students with medical conditions or sincerely held religious beliefs which do not allow immunizations must complete a waiver statement or affidavit. Forms are available in school health offices or on the District website. **Unimmunized students may be excluded from school in the event of a disease outbreak.**

Counseling Services

All WMS students are assigned to a counselor.

Westside counselors are masters-degree-level professionals who can help students with many needs, including academic success strategies, attendance problems, school/grade transition, course selection, peer and family concerns, and study skills. Counselors also help with course selection, serve on academic and behavior support teams, and visit classrooms periodically to teach guidance lessons on topics such as, making new friends, dealing with peer pressure, cliques, bullying, sexual harassment, goal-setting, decision-making, tolerance, diversity, and self-esteem.

Students who need to see their counselor should contact the guidance department's administrative assistant, who can help them connect. Students with an urgent need to speak with someone may be directed to another counselor, teacher, or administrator.

Evidence-Based Counseling

Westside's counseling staff employs an evidence-based model of school counseling. Evidence-based school counseling is the deliberate use of the best available data in planning, implementing, and evaluating school counseling interventions and programs.

Counselors provide individual and small group counseling, serve as a leader/coach on the behavior and academic support teams in the building, and are available to help meet needs and concerns of students and families.

Bullying Prevention Curriculum

Westside's bullying prevention curriculum is a collaborative effort of classroom teachers and school counselors. The purpose of the bullying prevention curriculum is to provide specific information to students on bullying behaviors and interventions.

Teachers and counselors integrate these concepts into all areas of curriculum and school interactions. Helping students understand their behavior choices and the consequences of their choices is the responsibility of all adults in the school.

Help for Students in Dealing with Bullying

Counselors, administrators, teachers, and other staff are all available to help any student who may experience any form of bullying.

Suggestions for Responding to Bullying

For Targets of Bullying

Things to Remember. Students who believe that they are targets of bullying should inform a caring adult. Students who are targeted should remember that:

- bullying is not the fault of the person being targeted.
- targets neither ask for, nor deserve, to be bullied.
- bullying isn't normal, and it's not okay.
- they don't need to face bullying on their own.

Ha-Ha-So Strategies. Ha-Ha-So Strategies are responses that targets of bullying may find useful in responding to bullies.

- **Help** — Seek help from an adult, friend, or peer when a potentially threatening situation arises. Seek help also if other strategies aren't working.
- **Assert Yourself** — Make assertive statements to the bully addressing your feelings about the bully's behavior.
- **Humor** — Use humor to de-escalate a situation.
- **Avoid** — Walk away or avoid certain places in order to avoid a bullying situation.
- **Self-Talk** — Use positive self-talk to maintain positive self-esteem during a bullying situation.
- **Own It** — "Own" the put-down/belittling comment in order to diffuse it.

For Bystanders Who See Bullying

The role of a bystander is often an uncomfortable one. Bystanders are often afraid of becoming victims if they stand up to a bully, or they may not know how to help. There are many positive things bystanders can do to help their peers and keep school safe and bully-free.

- **Don't Join In** — Participating or encouraging any negative behavior only encourages the bully and makes the victim, who could be a friend, feel helpless and alone.
- **Assist** — Students who see a potentially threatening situation arise, should get an adult immediately.
- **Lead** — Reporting a bullying incident is taking a responsible leadership role in creating a positive school climate. It is not tattling when a student protects a fellow classmate from being hurt. Students who report bullying can remain anonymous.
- **Work as a Team** — Acts as simple as walking to class with the target or sitting with the target at lunch sends a message and makes the target less vulnerable; bullies are often reluctant to pick on those who are not alone.
- **Stand Up** — Students who feel safe and confident can go to the target and say "Come on let's go to class" to remove him or her from the situation. They can also tell the bully to "Stop," "Leave him or her alone", or that "We don't treat people like that at our school."

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

In partnership with Children's Behavioral Health, Westside Community Schools offers a student assistance program to all Westside Community Schools students. This partnership is designed to identify and address the mental health needs of students and support families who might not otherwise have access to professional mental health services outside of the school setting.

Through the SAP, District students are eligible to receive mental health assessment/ counseling sessions. Westside educators may refer students and families to Children's Behavioral Health experts or families can self-refer by calling [402-955-3900](tel:402-955-3900) to schedule a consultation for their child.

Students with Disabilities: Special Education

Westside Community Schools has specific responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Nebraska Rules 51 and 52, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to identify, evaluate and provide free, appropriate public education for qualified children with disabilities. These laws define a child with a disability as any child who:

- Has a mental, emotional or physical disability; and
- Because of the disability, needs special education and related services.

Disability includes, but is not limited to: autism, emotional disability, hearing impairment, other health impairments, specific learning disability, mild, moderate or severe sensory impairment, orthopedic impairment, preschool moderate delay, preschool severe delay, preschool speech/language delay, speech language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment.

Students with Disabilities: Section 504

In order to fulfill its obligation under Section 504, Westside Community Schools recognizes its responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding its personnel and students. Discrimination against any person with a disability will not knowingly be permitted in any of the programs and practices in the school system. Federal and state laws entitle certain rights to the parent of a child who may need or is receiving special education services. Some of these rights include

1. Eligible children aged 0-21 must receive a free, appropriate public education at no expense to the parents (this may include services in a private or nonpublic school in some cases.)
2. The right to educational services that are based on an evaluation of the child's special needs and the educational performance in school.
3. The right to receive specialized instruction or services specially designed to meet the child's individual educational needs.
4. The right to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities unless determined by your child's team that such participation would be inappropriate and/or not in your child's best interest as documented in the educational plan.
5. The right of parents or guardians to be included in making decisions about their child's educational needs and to approve the educational plans for their child.

If you have an infant, toddler, or pre-Kindergartener and believe the child may have developmental delays or disabilities, please contact the Westside Early Development Network at 402-390-8207. Information regarding school-age special education services can be obtained from the school principal. If the parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the District, he or she may have the right to request an independent evaluation or a hearing with an impartial hearing officer to contest the determination. If there are questions, please feel free to contact the director of Special Services, Kami Jessop, at 402-390-2100.

Transportation Services

Parent Responsibility

Unless otherwise specified in District Policy, parents are responsible for providing transportation for their children to and from school.

Transportation for Resident Students

Route availability and fee information can be found by contacting the Westside Middle School office at 402-390-6464.

Transportation for Non-Resident Students

Option-Enrolled Students

Option students who qualify for free lunches shall be eligible for either free transportation or transportation reimbursement as follows.

For the 2023-24 school year, free transportation shall be offered to those option students who qualify for free lunch and live south of State Street, north of Q Street and east of Interstate 680. Such students will be offered, prior to the start of the school year (or within a designated period of time, if option enrollment is approved after the start of school), the opportunity to sign up for transportation and a deadline for acceptance.

Requests for service received after the deadline, as well as requests received for changes to transportation already being provided, will be considered quarterly by the Office of Student Services.

Upon mutual agreement of the District and the parent, reimbursement may be provided in lieu of free transportation for those students in the amount set forth by law.

Notification When Not Riding

The parents of any student who will NOT be riding on any day must call **Chief Bus Service (402-392-2144)** prior to 6:30 a.m. Repeated failure to provide such notice may result in suspension or termination of transportation.

Pick-up and Drop-off Locations

Pick-up locations for students using District transportation to travel to and from school will be designated at least annually by the Office of Student Services.

Transportation in Inclement Weather

Transportation is not provided on days when school is not in session. The District typically announces weather-related school closings no later than 6:30 a.m. Announcements are shared via a major radio and TV stations, Facebook, and Twitter. Parents/guardians can also sign up for voice, text, and email notifications.

If You Move

Parents must notify the Office of Student Services (402-390-2107) of all address changes.

Evacuation Drills

Student emergency evacuation drills are conducted twice per school year per route. Chief Transportation and the Office of Special Services will develop effective emergency evacuation plans for students whose disabilities may impede conventional evacuation methods.

Use of Video Recorders

To monitor student behavior and promote order, safety, and security, video cameras are used on District vans and buses transporting students. Due to the privacy rights of other students, parents/ guardians are not allowed to view bus recordings.

Option Enrollment Route Changes

Route Change Schedule		
Quarter	Deadline	Route Takes Effect
1	July 1	First day of school
2	October 1	First day of 2nd quarter
3	December 1	First day of 3rd quarter
4	March 1	First day of 4th quarter

Due to the complexity of Option Enrollment route configuration, routes are set up in July and then only adjusted quarterly. Change requests must be submitted in writing (preferably via email), to Julie Fumagalli (fumagalli.julie@westside66.net).

Parents/guardians of eligible students wishing to start or change transportation must submit requests no later than the quarterly deadline. Requests received after deadlines will be carried over to the next quarter.

Transportation of Homeless Students

Transportation shall be provided to children and youths determined by the District to be homeless, as required by law.

Comparable Service

Transportation shall be provided to homeless children and youths comparable to that provided to students who are not homeless.

School of Origin

When a homeless child or youth attends the school of origin, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin upon request of the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth, or upon request of the Homeless Liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth. If the homeless child or youth relocates out of the District but continues to be enrolled in the District based on it being the school of origin, the District shall negotiate with the school district in which the child or youth is residing to develop a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with transportation to and from the school of origin. If agreement is not reached, the responsibility and cost for transportation shall be shared equally.

Elimination of Barriers

Transportation shall be provided when necessary to eliminate barriers to school enrollment and to the child's or youth's full participation in the educational program of the school and retain children and youths experiencing homelessness.

Conduct While Using District Transportation

Westside's Student Code of Conduct (Board Policy 5300) extends to students' use of district-provided transportation. The policy is available on the District website, is included in this Handbook, and is posted at all District schools.

Special Conduct Rules for Riding District Transportation

Every Westside student who rides with us deserves a safe and pleasant trip. Please remember that school transportation is a privilege, not a right. These rules are provided so that all may enjoy their ride. Parents should review and discuss the rules with their child(ren). **Students who violate these rules or the Student Code of Conduct while riding may have their transportation privileges suspended or revoked.**

All students riding on District transportation are required to follow these Rules:

At All Times

Students and parents must:

- Immediately follow all instructions by the driver.
- Be respectful toward everyone, especially drivers and students.

When Waiting for the Vehicle

- Be at your stop five minutes before scheduled pick-up time. Drivers are not permitted to go back for students who miss the bus.
- Be mindful of traffic; wait at least six feet away from the street, and don't push, shove, or chase others while waiting.

When Boarding/Exiting the Vehicle

- Line up at the spot designated by the driver; stay back until vehicle is completely stopped.
- Don't push or crowd others; let younger students board first.

When Riding on the Vehicle

- Don't eat or drink while on the vehicle.
- Items and conduct not permitted at school aren't allowed on vehicles; put belongings on your lap or under your seat.
- Personal electronics may be used only with headphones or ear-buds as long as music is not audible to others.
- Speak at a reasonable volume; don't do anything that might distract the driver. Be silent at railroad tracks, so drivers can listen for trains.
- Keep all body parts to yourself and inside the vehicle; do not throw objects, either in or out of the vehicle.
- Stay seated and face forward while vehicle is moving, with both feet on the floor in front of you—not in the aisle.
- Don't open windows without permission; use emergency exits only during supervised drills or real emergencies.
- Don't damage the vehicle or the property of others. Parents must pay for damage caused by their child(ren).

When Exiting the Vehicle

- Stay seated until the bus stops; exit in a prompt, orderly manner.
- Take your belongings with you. Neither the District nor Chief is responsible for items left behind.
- Use handrails whenever exiting the bus; be careful when stepping down, especially when steps are wet.
- If crossing the street, cross in front of bus. Walk at least six feet from the side of bus and then at least ten feet in front of bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, don't try to pick it up before telling the driver, because he/she may not be able to see you.

Student Questions and Answers about Riding the Bus

Q: Why do I need a bus pass?

A: Providing bus transportation costs money. Bus passes ensure that only those who should be on the bus are riding the bus. Additionally, it ensures that there are enough seats on the bus for those who have signed up for it. Finally, it helps drivers get to know the names of those riding the bus, so that he or she can keep track of who is riding.

Q: When do I need to carry or show my bus pass?

A: You should have your pass with you at all times. You must show your pass whenever the bus driver, teacher, or other school or bus company employee asks to see it.

Q: When will I get my bus pass?

A: A teacher or administrator will get your bus pass to you before the end of the second full week of school.

Q: What if I forget my bus pass?

A: Before this happens ask your parents: “If I forget my pass, should I walk home? Who should I call to come and get me?” Your pass is your responsibility. If you forget your pass, you may request a temporary bus pass in the main office. This request should be made before 10 a.m. If you submit your request after 10 a.m., it will not be granted, and you will need to arrange for a ride home. You may only ask for 3 temporary passes for the entire year. After three, you will need to buy a new pass.

Q: What if I lose or can’t find my bus pass?

A: Your first replacement pass will cost \$1.00. Additional passes are \$5.00

Q: Can the bus driver make me sit in a certain seat?

A: Yes. It is the bus driver’s responsibility to make sure you are a responsible passenger. Drivers may assign a seat to any student who is not demonstrating safe or responsible behavior. If misbehavior continues, you will be written up by the bus driver, and a report will be given to the assistant principal. Your parent/guardian will be called, and you may lose your bus privileges for a while.

Q: How early do I need to be at my bus stop?

A: At least five minutes before your scheduled pickup time. Buses will not wait if you are late. If you miss the bus, it will be your parent/guardian’s responsibility to get you to school or home.

Q: What time do Activity Buses leave WMS?

A: The first Activity Bus departs at 4:05 p.m. If you ride the 4:05 p.m. bus, you will need your bus pass AND a pass from a teacher. Teachers will not write you a pass to ride the 4:05 p.m. bus unless you have been with that teacher since school was dismissed. The second Activity Bus leaves at 5:15 p.m. or later depending on practice schedule. ONLY students who are involved in an athletic activity or an approved after-school program may ride the 5:15 p.m. bus.

STUDENT RIGHTS, CONDUCT, RULES, AND REGULATIONS

Student Code of Conduct

Students of Westside Community Schools represent themselves, their families, their school, and the Westside Community. It is the intent of this Code of Conduct to promote responsible behavior among all students at school and in the community. This policy applies to all secondary and elementary students.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

"Short-term suspension" means the exclusion of a student from attendance in all schools within the District for a period not to exceed five school days.

"Long-term suspension" means the exclusion of a student from attendance in all schools within the District for a period exceeding five school days but less than twenty school days.

"Expulsion" means exclusion from attendance in all schools within the District (except the location designated for alternative education) for a period not exceeding the remainder of the semester in which the expulsion took effect, and in addition, the next full semester or other additional length of time to the extent permitted by the Nebraska Student Discipline Act.

"Mandatory reassignment" means the involuntary transfer of a student to another school in the District in connection with any disciplinary action.

"Other disciplinary action" includes, but is not limited to, open mod in-school suspension (applicable to high school only), in-school suspension, short and long-term restrictions on a student's participation in school sponsored activities, clubs, and athletic programs, temporary or permanent loss of privileges to ride on school-provided busses, vans or other transportation, student counseling, parent conferences, rearrangement of schedules, requiring a student to be in school other than regular school hours to do additional work, and requiring a student to receive counseling, psychological evaluation, or psychiatric evaluation upon the written consent of a parent or guardian to such counseling or evaluation.

"Harassment" on the basis of sex includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature and unwelcome verbal, written, or physical advance or suggestion of a sexual nature. Harassment on the basis of race, national origin, disability, age, religious beliefs, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender, or marital status includes, but is not limited to, any verbal or written statements to or about an individual which ridicules, slurs, mocks, derides, disparages, or makes fun of the individual because of his or her race, national origin, disability, age, religious beliefs, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender, or marital status.

"Bullying" is as defined in Board Policy 5310.

"Firearm", as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921, means (a) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (b) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (c) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (d) any Destructive Device.

"Destructive Device" includes (a) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, bomb, grenade, rocket having propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, a mine, or device similar to any of these devices; (b) any type of weapon by whatever name known which will, or which may be, readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has any barrel with a bore of more than one-half inch in diameter; and (c) any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device described in (a) or (b) and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

"Dangerous weapon" includes, without limitation, firearms, knives and switchblades (regardless of blade length), B.B. guns, stun guns, air-soft guns, ammunition, pipes, chains, brass knuckles (or any similar device made of another material"), or any item that has the appearance of a Dangerous Weapon or that is portrayed by the student as a Dangerous Weapon.

"Under the influence" of a controlled substance or alcoholic liquor has a less strict meaning than under criminal law; for purposes of this policy the term means any level of impairment and includes the odor of alcohol or controlled substance on the breath or person of a student.

"Hazing" is any activity by which a person intentionally or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health or safety of an individual for the purpose of initiation into, admission into, affiliation with, or continued membership in any school organization. Hazing activities include, but are not limited to, whipping, beating, branding, an act of sexual penetration, an exposure of the genitals of the body done with the intent to affront or alarm any person, a lewd fondling or caressing of the body of another person, forced and prolonged calisthenics, prolonged exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or harmful substance not generally intended for human consumption, prolonged sleep deprivation, or any brutal treatment or the performance of any unlawful act that endangers the physical or mental health or safety of any person. For purposes of school rules, hazing also includes any activity expected of someone joining a group, team, or activity that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate; personal servitude; restrictions on personal hygiene; yelling, swearing and insulting new members/rookies; being forced to wear embarrassing or

humiliating attire in public; consumption of vile substances or smearing of such on one's skin; binge drinking and drinking games; sexual simulation and sexual assault;

"Sexual assault" means sexual assault in the first degree as defined in section 28-319, sexual assault in the second degree as defined in section 28-320, sexual assault of a child in the second or third degree as defined in section 28-320.01, or sexual assault of a child in the first degree as defined in section 28-319.01, as such sections now provide or may hereafter from time to time be amended;

"Profane, vulgar or abusive" language or conduct includes, but is not limited to, that which is commonly understood and intended to be derogatory toward a group or individual based upon sex, race, disability, national origin, or religion or any other protected class under law.

STUDENT CONDUCT

I. ON SCHOOL GROUNDS/AT SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES/SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

- A. **Prohibited Conduct.** The following conduct set forth in Paragraphs 1-26 constitutes Prohibited Conduct if the conduct occurs on school grounds, a school-sponsored activity or athletic event, or in a vehicle owned, leased, or contracted by Westside Community Schools being used for a school purpose or in a vehicle driven for a school purpose by a school employee or by his or her designee. The conduct set forth in Paragraph 9 also constitutes Prohibited Conduct regardless of where the conduct occurs.
1. Use of violence, force, coercion, threat, intimidation, or similar conduct in a manner that constitutes a substantial interference with school purposes, or making any communication that a reasonable recipient would interpret as a serious expression of an intent to harm or cause injury to another person;
 2. Willfully causing or attempting to cause substantial damage to property, stealing or attempting to steal property of substantial value, or repeated damage or theft involving property;
 3. Causing or attempting to cause personal injury to any person;
 4. Threatening or intimidating any student for the purpose of or with the intent of obtaining money or anything of value from such student or making any threat which causes or may be expected to cause a disruption to school operations;
 5. Knowingly possessing, handling, or transmitting any object or material that is ordinarily or generally considered a weapon, including, but not limited to dangerous weapons;
 6. Engaging in the unlawful possession, selling, dispensing, or use of a controlled substance or an imitation controlled substance, as defined in section 28-401 of the Nebraska statutes, a substance represented to be a controlled substance, or alcoholic liquor as defined in section 53-103 of the Nebraska statutes, or being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcoholic liquor;
 7. Public indecency as defined in section 28-806 of the Nebraska statutes, except that the definition of public indecency applies only to students at least twelve years of age;
 8. Engaging in bullying as defined in Board Policy 5310;
 9. Sexual assault or attempted sexual assault of any person if a complaint has been filed by a prosecutor in a court of competent jurisdiction alleging that the student has sexually assaulted or attempted to sexually assault any person, including sexual assaults or attempted sexual assaults which occur off school grounds not at a school function, activity, or event.;
 10. Engaging in any other activity prohibited by the laws of the State of Nebraska or the City of Omaha which activity constitutes a danger to any person or that interferes with school purposes;
 11. Harassment or discrimination against any person on the basis of the individual's race, national origin, sex, disability, age, religious beliefs, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender, or marital status;
 12. Retaliation against any person for reporting or asserting a claim of harassment, discrimination or bullying;
 13. Possession or use of a cell phone or other electronic device in violation of rules contained in the Parent-Student Handbook;
 14. Behavior that constitutes a danger to any other person or that is disruptive to, or seriously interferes with, class work, school activities, or school transportation;
 15. Participating in hazing or being present and having knowledge that hazing that is occurring even if not directly participating;
 16. Plagiarism, cheating, or other academic dishonesty;
 17. A repeated violation of any rules and standards in this Code of Conduct, including paragraphs 18-26, if such violations constitute a substantial interference with school purposes;

18. Gambling;
19. The use of language, written or oral, or conduct, including gestures, that is profane, vulgar or abusive;
20. Insubordination, dishonesty, or gross disrespect to teachers, school officials, other school employees, volunteers, or bus/van drivers;
21. Skipping school, home room, or regulated time, being tardy, or being out of the building without permission;
22. Use or possession of any form of tobacco, tobacco or nicotine delivery device, or tobacco-product look-alike, e-cigarette or vapor ("vape") dispenser of any kind regardless of the substance, if any, that it contains;
23. Possession or use of any mood-altering or behavior-affecting substance regardless of whether possession or use is unlawful under the laws of the State of Nebraska;
24. Violation of student dress code, or clothing that is lewd or indecent, vulgar or plainly offensive, or that school officials reasonably conclude could materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school, or that a reasonable observer would interpret as advocating illegal drug use.
25. Intentionally making a false report or claim of harassment, discrimination or bullying;
26. Violation of the Internet Acceptable Use Responsibility Agreement or any computer use agreement;

B. Disciplinary Action for Prohibited Conduct on School Grounds, at a School-Sponsored Activity or Athletic Event, or in a Vehicle Being Used for School Purposes.

Prohibited Conduct described in paragraphs (1) through (17) above constitutes grounds for short or long-term suspension, expulsion, mandatory reassignment, and/or other disciplinary action.

Prohibited Conduct described in paragraphs (18) through (26) above constitutes grounds for short-term suspension and/or other disciplinary action. Alternatives to suspension or expulsion will be imposed against students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from required school activities.

The Board specifically determines that the types of conduct specified in paragraphs (1) through (26) have the potential to seriously affect the health, safety or welfare of student, staff and other persons or to otherwise seriously interfere with the educational process.

Procedures

The principal or designee will conduct a reasonable investigation of the alleged Prohibited Conduct, examine the facts and circumstances, contact law enforcement as required by law, and cooperate with any law enforcement investigation.

The student will be given an opportunity to present his or her version of the situation. The principal or designee will determine the appropriate disciplinary action based upon the severity and extent of the Prohibited Conduct. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to notify the student's parents or guardian of the alleged behavior violation and the reasons for disciplinary action.

Short-Term Suspension

1. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable investigation of the facts and circumstances. A short-term suspension shall be made only after a determination that the suspension is necessary to help any student, to further school purposes, or to prevent an interference with school purposes.
2. Before such short-term suspension takes effect, the student shall be given oral or written notice of the charges against him or her, an explanation of the evidence the District has, and be given an opportunity to explain his or her version.
3. Within 24 hours, or such additional time as is reasonably necessary following the suspension, the principal or administrator shall send a written statement to the student, and the student's parent or guardian, describing the student's conduct, misconduct or violation of the rule or standard and the reasons for the action taken. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to hold a conference with the parents or guardian before or at the time a student returns to school after a short-term suspension. At the time of the short-term suspension, the student and parent or guardian shall be provided with information regarding any opportunity to complete class work (including examinations) missed during the short-term suspension.

Long-Term Suspension, Expulsion and Mandatory Reassignment

Any long-term suspension, expulsion, and mandatory reassignment for Prohibited Conduct shall be subject to the procedural requirements set forth in the Student Discipline Act of the Nebraska statutes.

Length of Expulsion

1. Except as described in subparagraphs 2 and 3, expulsion shall mean exclusion from attendance in all schools within the system for a period not to exceed the remainder of the semester in which it took effect unless the misconduct occurred (a) within 10 school days prior to the end of the first semester, in which case the expulsion shall remain in effect through the second semester, or (b) within 10 school days prior to the end of the second semester, in which case the expulsion shall remain in effect for summer school and the first semester of the following school year. Such action may be modified or terminated by the District at any time during the expulsion period.
2. The expulsion of a student for: 1) the knowing and intentional use of force in causing or attempting to cause personal injury to a school employee, school volunteer, or student, except if caused by accident, self-defense, or on the reasonable belief that the force used was necessary to protect some other person; or 2) the knowing and intentional possession, use, or transmission of a dangerous weapon, other than a firearm, shall be for a period not to exceed the remainder of the school year in which it took effect if the misconduct occurs during the first semester. If the expulsion takes effect during the second semester, the expulsion shall remain in effect for summer school and may remain in effect for the first semester of the following school year. Such action may be modified or terminated by the School District at any time during the expulsion period.
3. A student found to have knowingly and intentionally possessed, used, or transmitted a firearm (as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921) on school grounds, at a school sponsored activity or athletic event, or in a vehicle being used for a school purpose shall be expelled from school for a period not less than one calendar year. The period of expulsion may be extended beyond one year to the beginning of the semester following the one-year period. The Superintendent is authorized to modify the expulsion requirement on an individual basis.
4. Any expulsion that will remain in effect during the first semester of the following school year shall be automatically scheduled for review before the beginning of the school year. The review shall be conducted by the hearing officer who conducted the initial expulsion hearing, or a hearing officer appointed by the Superintendent in the event no hearing was previously held, or the initial hearing officer is no longer available or willing to serve, after the hearing officer has given notice of the review to the student and the student's parent or guardian. This review shall be limited to newly discovered evidence or evidence of changes in the student's circumstances occurring since the original hearing. This review may lead to a recommendation by the hearing officer that the student be readmitted for the upcoming school year. If the Board of Education or a committee of such Board took the final action to expel the student, the student may be readmitted only by action of the Board. Otherwise, the student may be readmitted by action of the Superintendent.

School Activities

During any time period that a student is excluded from school due to short-term suspension, long-term suspension, expulsion, or emergency exclusion, the student will be prohibited from being on school grounds (except the location designated for alternative education), from attending any extracurricular activities that take place on district property, and from participating in any school-sponsored activities, clubs and athletic programs.

Other disciplinary action may also be imposed in the form of additional restrictions (beyond the length of the suspension, expulsion or emergency exclusion) on the student's participation in school-sponsored activities, clubs and athletic programs, where such curtailment is necessary to aid the student, further school purposes, or prevent interference with the educational process.

If such other disciplinary action is imposed (in the form of restrictions on the student's participation in school sponsored activities, clubs and/or athletic programs) beyond the time-period of the suspension, expulsion or exclusion, or is imposed in a situation where there has not been any accompanying suspension, expulsion or exclusion, the district shall follow the procedures as set forth in regulation to this policy.

C. School Transportation

The Code of Conduct requirements set forth in this policy apply equally to students when using any District-provided transportation.

Disciplinary action for behaviors that occur on District transportation includes, but is not limited to, temporary or permanent loss of riding privileges. During any period in which the transportation privilege is lost due to the misconduct of the student, transportation to and from school becomes the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent or designee will conduct a reasonable investigation of the alleged Prohibited Conduct and shall make reasonable effort to notify the student's parents or guardian of the alleged behavior violation. The student will be given an opportunity to present his or her version of the situation. The Superintendent or designee will determine the appropriate disciplinary action based upon the severity and extent of the Prohibited Conduct and shall make reasonable effort to notify the parent/guardian. Any short-term suspension, long-term suspension, expulsion, and or mandatory reassignment

from school for Prohibited Conduct shall be subject to the procedural requirements set forth in the Student Discipline Act of the Nebraska statutes.

II. OFF-SCHOOL GROUNDS/NOT AT SCHOOL SPONSORED ACTIVITY OR SCHOOL VEHICLE

Prohibited Conduct described in Paragraphs (1) – (26) that occurs off school grounds and not at a school-sponsored activity or athletic event or in a vehicle being used for a school purpose constitutes grounds for short-term suspension and/or other disciplinary action where the conduct could reasonably be expected to reach the school or impact the school environment, or where there is such other connection to the school that permits disciplinary action to be taken. In addition, the Prohibited Conduct described in Paragraph 9 remains subject to the full range of penalties as discussed in Section I.

1. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable investigation of the facts and circumstances. A short-term suspension shall be made only after a determination that the suspension is necessary to help any student, to further school purposes, or to prevent an interference with school purposes.
2. Before such short-term suspension takes effect, the student shall be given oral or written notice of the charges against him or her, an explanation of the evidence the District has, and be given an opportunity to explain his or her version.
3. Within 24 hours, or such additional time as is reasonably necessary following the suspension, the principal or administrator shall send a written statement to the student, and the student's parent or guardian, describing the student's conduct, misconduct or violation of the rule or standard and the reasons for the action taken. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to hold a conference with the parents or guardian before or at the time a student returns to school after a short-term suspension. At the time of the short-term suspension, the student and parent or guardian shall be provided with information regarding any opportunity to complete class work (including examinations) missed during the short-term suspension.

III. ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS FOR EXPELLED STUDENTS.

Expelled students will be offered an alternative school, class or educational program. The Approved alternative educational programs may include but shall not be limited to: online-courses, community-based programs, home-based programs, District-based programs, specialized tutoring, and distance learning. The administration shall have the authority to approve other specific alternative programs and enter into contracts for the provision of such alternative programs.

Such programs will include an individualized learning program to enable the student to continue academic work for credit towards graduation during the term of their expulsion.

IV. EMERGENCY EXCLUSION

A. **Emergency Exclusion Up to Five Days.** The principal or designee may exclude a student from school for not more than five school days if:

1. The student has a dangerous communicable disease transmissible through normal school contacts and the student poses an imminent threat to the health and safety of the school community, or
2. The student's conduct presents a clear threat to the physical safety of the student or to others or is so extremely disruptive as to make temporary removal necessary to preserve the rights of other students to pursue an education.

Before such emergency exclusion takes effect, the student shall be given oral or written notice of the reason for the exclusion, an explanation of the evidence supporting such exclusion, and be provided an opportunity to present his or her version. The principal or designee shall send a written statement to the student and the student's parents or guardians describing the reasons for the action taken. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to hold a conference with the parents before or at the time the student returns to school.

B. **Emergency Exclusion Beyond Five Days.** If the Superintendent or his or her designee determines that an emergency exclusion shall extend beyond the initial five school days, the following notice and hearing procedures shall be followed, and all procedures shall substantially comply with the provisions of sections 79-266 to 79-287 of the Student Discipline Act:

1. Written notice of the basis for the emergency exclusion beyond five days shall be given to the student and the student's parent/guardian by personal delivery or sent by registered or certified mail on or before the sixth day of the emergency exclusion, and shall include: a) A form on which the student or the student's parent/guardian may request a hearing, the date by which the hearing request must be received, and notice that, if such timely request is received, the requestor has a right to have that hearing held and a final determination made within ten school days after the first day of the emergency exclusion. b) Hearing procedures and appeal procedures. c) Advisement of the right to examine the student's academic and disciplinary records and any affidavits to be used and of the right to know the identity of witnesses and the substance of their testimony;
2. If a timely request for a hearing is made, the Superintendent or his or her designee shall appoint a hearing examiner, and the hearing examiner shall give oral or written notice to the principal, the student, and the student's parent/guardian of the time and place for the hearing. If the request of the student or the student's parent/guardian is received after the deadline date provided on the request for hearing form, the same basic procedure should be

followed and the hearing should be an expedited one since the student is already out of school, but the hearing and determination need not be completed by the end of the tenth school day following the exclusion.

Rules Regarding Other Conduct.

In the event that individual coaches or sponsors of activities and/or clubs impose eligibility restrictions for student participation in school sponsored activities for behavior other than those listed above, those restrictions or rules shall be written and communicated to the participating students. Violation of the restrictions or rules shall result in discipline ranging from a reprimand to permanent removal from the school sponsored activities and/or clubs.

Students with Disabilities

Suspension, expulsion and/or emergency exclusion of verified or eligible disabled students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 shall comply with District procedures and state and federal law.

Additional Rules and Expectations

Student Dress Code

A student's personal appearance is the responsibility of the student and their family. Students in the Westside Community Schools are expected to dress in a way that is appropriate for the school setting. Students should not dress in a manner that is dangerous to the health and safety of anyone or interferes with the learning environment or teaching process in our school. Following is a list of examples of attire that will not be considered appropriate; this list is not exclusive, and other forms of attire may be deemed by the Principal to be inappropriate for the school setting:

1. All students must wear a shirt, bottoms, (pants/sweatpants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings) and shoes (soft-bottomed slippers are not allowed). Undergarments are not considered tops or bottoms. Clothing/undergarments should cover a student's private body parts. Clothing should not expose genitals or undergarments.
2. Costumes and blankets should not be worn during the school day unless they are a part of a school-sponsored activity.
3. Clothing and jewelry should not advertise beer, alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
4. Clothing and jewelry should not be lewd, indecent, vulgar, make sexual references, exhibit nudity or profanity, or include violent images or language, hate speech, or images or language creating a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class.
5. Clothing and jewelry should not be able to be used as a weapon (ex: chains, spikes) or encourage horseplay or cause property damage (ex: cleats).
6. Clothing and jewelry should not promote illegal activity.
7. Heavy coats should be put away during the school day.
8. Unless it is part of a school-sponsored activity, students should not wear baseball caps, stocking caps, hoods. This does not prohibit religious headwear.

Consideration will be made for students who wear special clothing as required by religious beliefs, disability, or to convey a particularized message protected by law. Westside Community Schools' Dress Code guidelines have been developed to create safe and productive learning environments where all students are accepted, engaged, celebrated, and have the opportunity to thrive in school. The final decision regarding attire and grooming will be made by the Principal. In the event a student is uncertain as to whether a particular item or method of grooming is consistent with the school's guidelines, the student or student's parent/guardian should contact the Principal for pre-approval. If school staff determine that the student does not meet dress code, the student will be asked to change.

Coaches, sponsors or teachers may have additional requirements for students who are in special lab classes, students who are participants in performing groups or students who are representing the school as part of an extracurricular activity program.

Violations of the dress code will expose the student to disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct.

Bullying, Harassment, and Retaliation

Bullying is any unwanted, aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Harassment includes the same behaviors, though not necessarily exercised from a standpoint of observed or perceived power.

Students who are victims of bullying or harassment, or who observe such conduct occurring, are to promptly report the matter to a teacher or to the Principal, so that the problem can be addressed. Retaliation against students who make reports of bullying activity is also prohibited. Students who engage in bullying, harassment, or retaliation are subject to the full range of penalties, including long-term suspension or expulsion.

Dating Violence

The goal of Westside Community Schools is to provide physically safe and emotionally secure environments for all students. Dating violence involving students at school will not be tolerated.

“Dating violence” shall mean a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner. “Dating partner” shall mean any person, regardless of gender, involved in an intimate relationship with another person primarily characterized by the expectation of affectionate involvement whether casual, serious, or long term.

The District shall provide dating violence training to staff deemed appropriate by the administration. Dating violence training shall include, but not be limited to, basic awareness of dating violence, warning signs of dating violence, and this dating violence policy. Dating violence education shall be incorporated into the school program as is age-appropriate. Dating violence education shall include, but not be limited to, defining dating violence, recognizing dating violence warning signs, and identifying characteristics of healthy dating relationships.

Inappropriate Public Displays of Affection

Students are not to engage in inappropriate public displays of affection on school property or at school activities. Such conduct includes kissing, touching, fondling, or other displays of affection that would be reasonably considered to be embarrassing or a distraction to others.

Nuisance Items

Students are not permitted to bring items that might reasonably have the potential to disrupt school operations, except when their presence serves an educational purpose approved by the Principal. The School is not responsible for items that are lost or broken. Pets are not allowed unless prearranged with the teacher and approved by the Principal.

Use of Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Student use of cell phones and other electronic devices in classrooms and other instructional areas is prohibited during school hours (from 8:00 a.m. until the final dismissal bell). [This does not include devices authorized by a staff member for an educational assignment or by an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan when used as set forth in the plan]. Phones must be off and in school lockers from 8:00 a.m. until the final dismissal bell).

Students are permitted to use cell phones and other electronic devices before and after school hours if used in conformity with these rules. The principal or other building leader may, in addition, prohibit possession or use of cell phones and other electronic devices on school grounds during these times if he or she determines that such restriction is appropriate.

Use or possession of cell phones and other electronic devices, including the recording of any person, on school grounds, at school-sponsored events, and in school vehicles is **prohibited** when the use or possession:

- disrupts or is reasonably likely to disrupt the educational environment;
- is an illegal activity under state, federal or local law/ordinance;
- is prohibited under any Board policy including, but not limited to, the Student Code of Conduct (Board Policy 5300) or District rules for internet use;
- is contrary to a directive previously given to a student by a staff member;
- creates a risk to the safety of students or others;
- infringes on a person's reasonable expectation of privacy; or
- constitutes “sexting.”

In addition to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct, cell phones and other electronic devices used in violation of these rules are subject to confiscation, and arrangements will be made to return the item to the student or a parent/guardian after school hours.

Definitions

“Cell phones and other electronic devices” includes, without limitation, cell phones, cameras, camcorders, computers, Mp3 players, portable gaming devices, two-way radios or any electronic or battery powered device that can transmit still images, video, or sound.

“Recording” includes capturing the image or voice of a person by photograph, audio recording, video or audio transmission, as well as transmitting, broadcasting, or streaming.

“Sexting” means generating, sending or receiving, encouraging others to send or receive, or showing others, through an electronic device, a text message, photograph, video or other medium that:

- displays sexual content, including erotic nudity or any sexually explicit conduct as defined in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1463.02; or
- displays a sexually explicit message for sexual gratification, flirtation or provocation, or to request or arrange a sexual encounter.

Network, Email, and Other Computer Rules

District technology, including network and Internet access, is the property of the District, and is provided as a tool for students' educational use. Students should not assume that their use of District technology is private. Use of District technology, including email, is not private. In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act, the District will monitor computer usage and employ technology protection measures. The District may inspect, copy, review, transfer, and store, at any time and without prior notice, any and all usage of the district's computers, computer network, Internet access and any and all information transmitted or received (including e-mail). The superintendent or designee shall develop regulations, which may include descriptions of inappropriate uses in addition to those included in this policy.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Use of the District's technology resources is a privilege and not a right. The Superintendent or designee shall develop appropriate user agreements and shall require that students and their parent/guardian to sign such user agreements as a condition of access to the technology resources. Parents and guardians shall inform the Superintendent or designee in writing if they do not want their child to have access.

The Superintendent and designees are authorized to establish such other regulations, forms, procedures, guidelines and standards to implement this Policy.

District technology resources are not a public forum. The District reserves the right to restrict any communications and to remove communications that have been posted.

ACCEPTABLE USES

Technology resources are to be used for the limited purpose of advancing the District's mission, and are provided to students for educational purposes only.

Parents are provided a copy of the District's Acceptable Use Agreement at the start of each school year as part of the Back-to-School Update. A copy of the Acceptable Use Agreement is available on the District website.

Reporting Student Law Violations

School administrators will report to law enforcement student actions if the violation:

1. involves a firearm;
2. results in child abuse;
3. is a violation of state law such that the administration believes it would not adequately be addressed solely by discipline from the school district;
4. is a violation of state law that endangers the health and welfare of any student or staff member or that interferes with school purposes;
5. is one for which a report is required or requested by law enforcement or the county attorney.

Removal of Students by Law Enforcement

When a Principal or other school official releases a minor student to a peace officer (e.g., police officer, sheriff, and all other persons with similar authority to make arrests) for the purpose of removing the minor from school premises, the Principal or other school official will take immediate steps to notify the parent, guardian, or responsible relative of the minor regarding the release of the minor to the officer and regarding the place to which the minor is reportedly being taken. An exception applies when a minor has been taken into custody as a victim of suspected child abuse; in that event, the Principal or other school official shall provide the peace officer with the address and telephone number of the minor's parents or guardian.

In-School Suspension (ISS) Procedures

The rules and expectations while in in-school-suspension:

- ISS starts at 8:00 a.m. and continues until 3:15 p.m.
- Students who are assigned ISS will report to the main office when they arrive to school on the day of the ISS. Students will wait in the main office until 8:00 a.m.
- Students are to
 - bring with them all of their school materials.
 - stay in the seat assigned to them unless given permission to do otherwise.
 - complete all assignments sent to them by their teachers before ISS is completed.

- remain quiet and not talk or pass notes to anyone.
- Lunch will be provided for students, but student may bring lunch from home if they choose. Catered food is not allowed.
- Students may be required to complete additional tasks related to the offense for which they are assigned ISS, or they may be required to complete a mediation essay.
- Failure to comply with these rules and expectations can result in additional time assigned to ISS or an out of school suspension.

Restricted Lunch Procedures

The rules and expectations while restricted lunch:

- Students should
 - be in the assigned room by the time the bell rings. Students who are late may receive consequences.
 - be responsible for cleaning up their area when they are done with lunch.
 - remain quiet.
 - be present for the assigned number of days. Absences will not count for days assigned.
- Lunch will be provided for students, but student may bring lunch from home if they choose. Catered food is not allowed.
- Students who are assigned restricted lunch without sufficient notice to bring a lunch will be provided a sack lunch at their regular lunch price.
- Failure to follow these expectations will result in an extension of assigned days in restricted lunch or other consequences.

Detentions Before or After School with a Teacher

Rules and expectations for those assigned a detention before or after school with a teacher:

- Students should
 - be in the assigned room by the time the bell rings. Students who are late may receive consequences.
 - carry and maintain a pass from a teacher if they have a morning detention. Without a pass, students may not be able to continue to their destination.
 - follow instructions and complete work.
- Failure to follow these expectations may result in further detentions.

Wednesday Night School

Rules and expectations for those assigned to Wednesday Night School (3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.):

- Students should
 - be in the assigned room by 3:00 p.m. Students who are late may receive consequences.
 - follow instructions and complete work.
- Failure to follow these expectations may result in further consequences.

Saturday School

Rules and expectations for those assigned to Saturday School (8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.):

- Students should
 - be in the assigned room by 8:00 a.m. Students who are late will not be allowed in and may receive consequences.
 - follow instructions and complete work.
 - cell phones and headphones must be turned into supervisor.
- Failure to follow these expectations may result in further consequences.

WESTSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Be Safe • Be Respectful • Be Responsible

	WMS Expectation	Before School	Hallways and Stairways	Bathrooms	Cafeteria	PAC	After School
S A F E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep hands and feet to yourself Walk facing forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remain seated in gym or cafeteria Keep aisle area clear Keep hands, feet, and belongings to yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep hands and feet to yourself Walk facing forward Stay to the right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flush toilet after use Wash your hands Keep water and soap in the sink Throw paper towels in the garbage can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in your seat Keep hands and feet to yourself Touch only your own food or drink 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep hands and feet to yourself Walk to your seat and stay seated Walk as you leave the PAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep hands, feet, and belongings to yourself Walk
R E S P E C T F U L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow all school expectations and procedures Speak respectfully to adults and peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow instructions Accept feedback Treat peers and adults with respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow instructions Use a quiet voice Move with a purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flush toilet after use Use a quiet voice Keep walls and floors clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow anyone to sit at your table Use a quiet voice Sign out and have a pass if you leave the cafeteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep feet on the floor Be quiet and attentive to the speaker Applaud when appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use respectful language Follow adult instructions
R E S P O N S I B L E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be on time Bring all your materials Report unsafe behavior to an adult Pick up after yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit and stay in designated area Have a pass if you need to see a teacher before school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrive to class on time Pick up after yourself Use trash cans in the building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flush toilet after use Return to your classroom quickly and quietly Report issues to an adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy food and drinks only for yourself Keep all food and drink in the cafeteria Stay in your assigned section Clean your area before being dismissed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep gum, candy, and drinks outside the PAC Pick up after yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check that you have all your belongings and bus pass before leaving Arrive at your bus on time Exit the building by 3:30 Get permission to re-enter the building

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Activities and Athletics

Learning at WMS does not stop when the bell rings at the end of the day. Activities are offered for all students after school, before school, and during homeroom. All students are encouraged to become involved in many activities.

After School

Teacher help, library study time, and athletics, are available for students after school. Students involved must follow the school guidelines when staying at school beyond the dismissal bell.

WMS Athletic Opportunities

WMS combines competitive and intramural programs for both 7th and 8th grade girls and boys. The WMS philosophy is to provide an opportunity for all students to participate at their developmentally appropriate level. Therefore, there is a “no cut” policy. Every student who chooses to participate in athletics will be placed on a team. Competitive teams are divided based on ability, and intramural teams are divided randomly.

Important things to know before participating:

- For safety reasons, all students who choose to participate in athletics at WMS are required to have an athletic physical and family consent on file in the athletic director’s office before they are allowed to practice or play. WMS provides no insurance coverage. The athlete’s family is responsible for providing adequate insurance coverage. The school does offer supplemental student accident insurance, and forms may be obtained in the main office.
- Because athletics is an extracurricular activity, students are required to be in school for more than half of the school day in order to practice or play in a contest. Students must be in good academic standing. Athletics does not take precedence over academic concerns, behavior issues, or religious obligations.
- Each athlete is required to behave in a manner that exemplifies good sportsmanship and conduct. Any athlete who discredits WMS will be subject to disciplinary actions.
- Competitive athletic practices typically run from 3:30 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. every school day, except Wednesdays. Bus transportation is available for athletes who normally ride the bus. This bus leaves at 5:30 p.m.
- Competitive athletic contests are typically scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3:45 p.m. Unless notified in advance, transportation to and from all athletic contests will be provided by WMS.
- Intramurals run for three weeks after school from 3:25 p.m. until 3:55 p.m. Bus transportation is available for students who normally ride the bus. This bus leaves at 4:05 p.m.
- Student spectators will not be allowed at intramural contests.
- Students reaching the age of 15 prior to August 1 are not eligible for interscholastic competition at WMS.
- Athletic schedules can be viewed on the middle school homepage.

Student Fees Policy

Some school activities may require additional costs to students as a separate charge. No fees, specialized or non-specialized attire or equipment shall be required of students outside this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

“Extracurricular Activities” means student activities or organizations which are supervised or administered by the school district, which do not count toward graduation or advancement between grades, and in which participation is not required by the school district;

“Post-secondary education costs” means tuition and other fees associated with obtaining credit from a post-secondary educational institution.

The District may charge student fees or require students to provide specialized equipment or attire for:

1. Participation in extracurricular activities, including extracurricular music courses
2. Admission fees and transportation charges for spectators attending extracurricular activities
3. Post-secondary education costs, limited to tuition and fees associated with obtaining credits from a post-secondary institution
4. Transportation for option students and nonresident students (not qualifying for free lunches) as allowed by state statute

5. Copies of student files or records as allowed by state statute
6. Reimbursement to the district for property lost or damaged by the student
7. Before-and-after school or pre-kindergarten services in accordance with state statute
8. Summer school or night school
9. Breakfast and lunch programs
10. Parking

Musical Instruments

The District may also require students to furnish musical instruments for participation in optional music courses that are not extracurricular activities. The school will work with students eligible for fee waivers to furnish each with an instrument consistent with the student's interest, taking into consideration the cost and availability of instruments at the time.

Student Fees Handbook

The specific student fees that will be charged to students during the current school year, and items that students will be required to furnish, can be found in [Board Policy #6340](#). This policy is updated in the spring prior to the next school year; therefore, the fee(s) amount is subject to change.

Fee Waivers

Waivers for any of the following shall be provided for students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches:

1. Fees and specialized equipment and specialized attire required for participation in extracurricular activities;
2. Admission fees for on-site district-sponsored extracurricular activities and district transportation charges for spectators attending off site extracurricular activities; and
3. Materials required for course projects where the project becomes the property of the student upon completion of the course.

DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO

Drug Free Schools

The Board of Education establishes the Westside Community Schools as drug-free schools as set forth in the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 2002.

Conduct Standards for Students. The standards of conduct that are applicable to students, and that clearly:

1. prohibit the unlawful possession, use, distribution or sale of illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco by students on school premises or as a part of any of the school's activities;
2. prohibit the possession or use of weapons, and;
3. set forth the standards for maintaining an appropriate classroom environment, are contained in Board Policy 5300 - Student Code of Conduct.

Disciplinary sanctions, up to and including student expulsion and referral for prosecution, will be imposed as described in Board Policy 5300 on students who violate the Student Code of Conduct.

Education and Prevention

The District promotes comprehensive, age appropriate, developmentally based drug and alcohol education and prevention programs. The curriculum includes the teaching of both proper and incorrect use of drugs and alcohol for all students in all grades. The District provides in-service orientation and training for staff with regard to drug and alcohol education and prevention programs.

Drug and Alcohol Use and Prevention

Each student of the District is hereby provided a copy of the standards of conduct for student behavior in the District which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol on school premises or as a part of any of the school's activities.

Program of the District Pursuant to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Laws and Regulations

All students are provided an age appropriate, developmentally based drug and alcohol education and prevention program. The program educates on the adverse effects of the use of illicit drugs and alcohol, with the primary objective being the prevention of illicit drug and alcohol use by students.

Drug and Alcohol Counseling, Rehabilitation and Re-entry Programs

Information concerning available drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs is available to all of the students upon request of the Counselor. In the event of disciplinary proceedings against a student for any District policy pertaining to the prohibition against the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol, appropriate school personnel may confer with the student and the student's parents or guardian concerning available drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs that appropriate school personnel consider to be of benefit.

Standards of Student Conduct Pertaining to Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

These standards are specified in Board Policy 5300 and elsewhere in this Handbook.

Intervention

The District does not have the authority or responsibility to make medical or health determinations regarding chemical dependency. However, when observed behavior indicates that a problem exists which may affect the student's ability to learn or function in the educational environment, the school has the right and responsibility to refer the student for a formal chemical dependency diagnosis based on behavior observed by school staff.

STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Harassment and Retaliation Are Prohibited

Westside Community Schools prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, marital, parental or pregnancy status, military status and any other basis protected by law in its programs and activities or in admission or access to, or treatment in, hiring and employment, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Retaliation for reporting discrimination or harassment or for participating in an investigation is also prohibited and will not be tolerated.

If you have concerns SHARE them with the building principal, a dean, counselor or any other building administrator or teacher or the Title IX Coordinator listed below. You may, but are not required to, fill out a Report of Concern Form, which is available on our website: westside66.org, in the main office or from the Title IX Coordinator.

The Title IX coordinator can also answer questions about our nondiscrimination policies and procedures. The designated Title Coordinator for students, parents, and others is

Director of Student Services
Westside Community Schools
909 South 76th Street
Omaha, NE 68114
(402) 390-2100

Board Policy 5330 "Equal Educational Opportunity and Nondiscrimination" has information for students and parents about harassment and discrimination. For further information about anti-discrimination laws or to file a complaint of discrimination you may also contact

Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Dept. of Education
One Petticoat Lane, 1010 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor, Suite 320
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 268-0550, Fax (816) 268-0599, (TDD) (800) 877- 8339, or
ocr.kansascity@ed.gov.

Notice to Parents of Rights Afforded by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The following is a description of the rights granted to qualifying students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The intent of the law is to keep you fully informed concerning the decisions about your child and to inform you of your rights if you disagree with any of these decisions. You have the right to:

1. Have your child take part in, and receive benefits from, public education programs without discrimination because of his/her disability.
2. Have the school district advise you of your rights under federal law.
3. Receive notice with respect to identification, evaluation or placement of your child.
4. Have your child receive a free appropriate public education.
5. Have your child receive services and be educated in facilities which are comparable to those provided to every student.
6. Have evaluation, educational and placement decisions made based on a variety of information sources and by persons who know the student and who are knowledgeable about the evaluation data and placement options.
7. Have transportation provided to and from an alternative placement setting (if the setting is a program not operated by the district) at no greater cost to you than would be incurred if the student were placed in a program operated by the district.
8. Have your child be given an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities offered by the district.
9. Examine all relevant records relating to decisions regarding your child's identification, evaluation and placement.
10. Request mediation or an impartial due process hearing related to decisions or actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, educational program or placement. (You and your child may take part in the hearing. Hearing requests are to be made to the Superintendent.)
11. File a local grievance.

Notification of Rights Under FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (also known as “FERPA”) is a federal law that protects the privacy of educational records (see Board Policy 5220 for more information).

The **2023-2024 Annual Notice of FERPA Rights** is published on the District’s website (westside66.org) in the Student Services section. A paper copy of the FERPA Notice may also be obtained from the Office of Student Services at 402-390-2100. The FERPA Notice contains information about Westside’s use and disclosure of a student’s educational records, access to records, information that may be disclosed without parental consent and how parents can opt-out of disclosure of information.

The following is a summary only of some of the information in the 2023-2024 Annual Notice:

Westside has designated these items of information that may be disclosed without consent (unless the parent or student age 18 or over has opted-out of such disclosure):

- Student name;
- Mailing address of first-listed parent and designated “home” telephone number in PowerSchool to military recruiters (11th and 12th grade only);
- Mailing address[es] of parents to the Westside Foundation for mailing purposes only (not for publication);
- Photograph and video/film of a student for inclusion in any school-sponsored publication or production, on the District’s social media sites and websites, or in response to a request by news media for a copy of a photo;
- Photograph and video/film of a student when permitted by the District to be taken by news media on school grounds during the school day;
- Dates student enrolled/dis-enrolled in the District, enrollment status and grade level;
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports;
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams;
- Degrees, honors and awards received; and
- The most recent school/school district attended by the student prior to Westside Community Schools;

Such information may appear in school publications, yearbooks, playbills, the District’s website and social media, calendars, newsletters, and any other District publications, honor roll or other recognition lists, graduation programs, and sports and other activity sheets.

How to Opt-Out

Parents or students age 18 and over may opt-out of the District’s disclosure of any or all of the above items.

To obtain an Opt-Out Form contact your building principal. Opt-Out Forms are due by September 15 of each year. Opt-Out Forms will be accepted after September 15; however, some information may have already been disseminated that cannot be changed or reversed.

Notice Concerning Designation of Law Enforcement Unit

The District designates the Omaha Police Department as the District’s law enforcement unit for purposes of (1) enforcing any and all federal, state or local law, (2) maintaining the physical security and safety of the schools in the District, and (3) maintaining safe and drug free schools.

Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The PPRA gives parents certain rights regarding surveys given to students and the collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that asks questions about one or more of the following protected areas (protected information survey) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family
3. Sexual behavior or attitudes
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents

8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility

Receive notice and opportunity to opt a student out of:

1. Any other protected information survey (see 8 areas listed above – regardless of funding).
2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the District or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under Nebraska law.
3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Inspect, upon request and before distribution or use:

- a. Protected information surveys.
- b. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes.
- c. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

The District will notify parents of specific or approximate dates when such surveys are to be given. These rights transfer to the student at age 18 or upon emancipation under Nebraska law.

The District has adopted policies, in consultation with parents, regarding these rights. See Board of Education Policies 2235 and 5220 and regulations thereto. These may be accessed on the District's website at westside66.org.

This Notification of Rights Under the PPRA will be provided directly to parents at least annually at the start of each school year (and after any substantive changes to any applicable Board Policies). It will also appear on the District's website. Questions or concerns about the PPRA may be directed to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment at 402-390-2127. Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Policy Regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless children for purposes of this Policy generally include children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, as further defined by applicable federal and state law.

No Stigmatization or Segregation of Homeless Students

It is the District's policy and practice to ensure that homeless children are not stigmatized or segregated by the District on the basis of their status as homeless.

Enrollment of and Services to Homeless Children

A homeless child shall be enrolled in compliance with the law and be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school in which the homeless child has been placed. Placement of a homeless child is determined based on the child's "school of origin" and the "best interests" of the child. The "school of origin" means the school that the child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled. Placement decisions shall be made according to the District's determination of the child's best interests, and shall be at either: (1) the child's school of origin for the duration of the child's homelessness (or, if the child becomes permanently housed during the school year, for the remainder of that school year) or (2) the school of the attendance area where the child is actually living. It shall be presumed that keeping a homeless child or youth enrolled in his or her school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when such is contrary to the wishes of the homeless child's parent or legal guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth. To overcome the presumption that a child or youth should remain in his or her school of origin, the school shall consider student-centered facts including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth. If the placement is not in the school of origin or a school requested by the homeless child's parent or legal guardian, the District shall provide a written explanation of the placement decision and a statement of appeal rights to the parent or guardian as provided in Nebraska Rule 19.

If the homeless child is an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Coordinator shall assist in the placement decision, consider the views of the unaccompanied youth, and provide the unaccompanied youth with notice of the right to appeal. The process to resolve disputes concerning the enrollment or placement of a homeless child or youth is as follows:

1. The district shall provide a written response and explanation of a decision regarding any complaint or dispute of a parent, guardian or other person having legal or actual charge or control of a homeless child or youth within thirty (30) calendar days of the time such complaint or dispute is brought;

2. The enrollment of the homeless child or youth in the school where enrollment is sought during the time such dispute is being considered;
3. And notice of the right to appeal as provided in Nebraska Rule 19.

Any parent, guardian or other person having legal or actual charge or control of a homeless child or youth that is dissatisfied with the decision of a school district after the dispute resolution process may file an appeal with the Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the decision. Such appeals are informal and shall be submitted to the Commissioner in writing, as outlined in Nebraska Department of Education Rule 19, Section 005.03. The District shall immediately contact the school last attended by the homeless child to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the homeless child needs to obtain immunizations or medical records, the District shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the homeless child to the Homeless Coordinator, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations or medical records. The District may nonetheless require the parent or guardian of the homeless child to submit contact information.

Transportation will be provided to homeless students, to the extent required by law and comparable to that provided to students who are not homeless, upon request of the parent or guardian of the homeless child, or by the Homeless Coordinator in the case of an unaccompanied youth, as follows: (1) if the homeless child's school of origin is in the District, and the homeless child continues to live in the District, transportation to and from the school of origin shall be provided by the District; and (2) if the homeless child lives in a school other than the District, but continues to attend the Westside Community Schools based on it being the school of origin, the new school and Westside Community Schools shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin and, if they are unable to agree, the responsibility and cost for transportation shall be shared equally.

Breakfast and Lunch Programs

The District has agreed to participate in the National School Lunch Program and accepts responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction. The District provides the United States Department of Agriculture's required nondiscrimination statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The school food authority assures the State Department of Education that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy to determine children's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals in all National School Lunch Programs. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the school food authority:

1. Agrees to serve meals free to children from families whose income meets eligibility guidelines.
2. Agrees to serve meals at a reduced price to children from families whose income falls between free meal scale and the poverty guidelines.

3. Agrees to provide these benefits to any child whose family's income falls within the criteria in Attachment A after deductions are made for the following special hardship conditions which could not reasonably be anticipated or controlled by the household: Unusually high medical expenses; shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of reported income; special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child; disaster or casualty losses.
4. In addition, agrees to provide these benefits to children from families who are experiencing strikes, layoffs and unemployment which cause the family income to fall within the criteria set forth in federal guidelines.
5. Agrees there will be no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of the children eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals shall not be published, posted or announced in any manner and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens or tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced-price meals shall not be required to: work for their meals; use a separate lunchroom; go through a separate serving line; enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance; eat meals at a different time; or eat a meal different from the one sold to children paying the full price.
6. Agrees in the operation of child nutrition programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, or national origin.
7. Agrees to establish and use a fair hearing procedure for parental appeals to the school's decisions on applications and for school officials' challenges to the correctness of information contained in an application or to be continued eligibility of any child for free or reduced-price meals. During the appeal and hearing the child will continue to receive free or reduced priced meals. A record of all such appeals and challenges and their dispositions shall be retained for three (3) years. Prior to initiating the hearing procedures, the parent or local school official may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent and school official to discuss the situation, present information, and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing. The hearing procedure shall provide the following:
 - a. A publicly announced, simple method for making an oral or written request for a hearing.
 - b. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
 - c. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
 - d. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing and adequate notice as to the time and place of the hearing.
 - e. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting a position without undue interference.
 - f. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
 - g. The hearing be conducted, and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in the decision under appeal or in any previous conference.
 - h. The parties concerned, and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official.
8. Agrees to designate the Director of Nutrition Services to review applications and make determinations of eligibility. This official will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
9. Agrees to develop and send to each child's parent or guardian a letter as outlined by State Department of Education including an application form for free or reduced-price meals at the beginning of each school year. Applications may be filed at any time during the year. All children from a family will receive the same benefits.

The following information is available in the office of the Director of Nutrition Services:

- Eligibility criteria for free and reduced meals
- Parent letter and application
- Public release
- Collection procedure

Nutrition Service Payment Options and Unpaid Meal Charges Procedures

Parents/guardians are responsible for meal payment to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents/guardians at regular intervals during the school year.

Westside Community Schools provides multiple options for which a student and parent/guardian are able to pay for a student's meal or snack items. Through the district's designated app, accounts assigned to a student can have monies deposited into each account to be withdrawn from to pay for a student's meal and/or a la carte food/beverage item. The student's account can receive deposits over the internet, or at the school's point of sale (POS)/cash register via cash, credit card, or check. Furthermore, schools have the ability to accept cash, credit card, or check for lunch payment.

All school cafeterias possess computerized POS/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and said records are available by setting up an account at the districts designated account management program or by speaking with the cafeteria manager.

Effect of Negative Balances

1. Full Pay Students

Full-pay students will pay for meals at the district's published standard rate each day. Students will be allowed to charge into a negative balance with no notice or communication to the child. If a student's account is charged into the negative beyond a total of the equivalent of 3 lunch meal charges, the building principal or designee will contact the parent(s) or guardian to notify them of the deficit account, establish a repayment method regarding this account, and (re)introduce the application for free or reduced meals. The student will be allowed to continue to receive the chosen meal from the menu, and the District will not impose an alternative meal requirement for students with unpaid meal debt. This is done to maintain the dignity of the student as well as to avoid possible negative perceptions toward the student and in recognition that it is the responsibility of parents, not the student, to maintain positive account balances. When accounts are in the negative, only a qualified meal will be allowed, and students will not be allowed to charge for additional "extra" items such as a second entrées and a la carte items.

2. Free Meal Benefit Students

All qualified free meal status students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch each day. A student must have an account in the positive to purchase any a la carte items or must pay for these items with cash. A free student will not be allowed to charge into the negative for a la carte or extra items.

3. Reduced Meal Benefit Students

All reduced meal cost status students will be allowed to receive a breakfast and lunch each day at the standard reduced meal price of the district. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of six (6) meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. Once a student has charged those six meals, the principal or designee will contact the parent(s) or guardian to notify them of the deficit account, establish a repayment method regarding this account, and (re)introduce the application for free or reduced meals. The student will be allowed to continue to receive the chosen meal from the menu, and the District will not impose an alternative meal requirement for students with unpaid meal debt. This is done to maintain the dignity of the student as well as to avoid possible negative perceptions toward the student and in recognition that it is the responsibility of parents, not the student, to maintain positive account balances.

When accounts are negative, only the qualified meal will be allowed, and students will not be allowed to charge for additional "extra" items such as second entrees and a la carte items. If a student has money in hand to purchase a reduced price or paid meal at the time of meal service, the student must be provided a meal. The District may not use the student's money to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal.

The District shall not permit the assistance of unauthorized persons, such as parent or guardian volunteers, to assist with notification to parents of meal account status or collection efforts.

Carry-Over of Funds

Any balance in a continuing student's account will be carried over to the next school year. Refunds for Students Who Dis-Enroll or Graduate Parents will be contacted by the District to direct how they wish their remaining funds be disbursed, such as return payment to them or transfer to a sibling's account. Parents of full-pay students may also choose the option of donating their remaining funds to an unpaid meal balance fund (used to offset uncollectable meal charges). Parents must direct, in writing (including via e-mail) how they want the remaining funds disbursed.

Notice Concerning Staff Qualifications

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) gives parents the right to acquire information about the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teachers. Upon request, Westside Community Schools will give parents the following information about their child's classroom teacher:

1. Whether the teacher has met State qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
2. Whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency or provisional teaching certificate.

3. The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher. You may also get information about other graduate certification or degrees held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.

We will also, upon request, tell parents whether their child is being provided services by a paraprofessional and, if so, the qualifications of the paraprofessional. The request for information should be made to an administrator in your child's school building. The information will be provided to you in a timely manner.

Finally, Westside Community Schools will give timely notice to you if your child has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks, by a teacher who does not meet the requirements of the Act.

