

School Community Handbook



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Sweet Home Central School District of Amherst and
Tonawanda

Willow Ridge Elementary School
480 Willow Ridge Drive • Amherst, New York 14228
(716) 250-1575
Fax (716) 250-1585

July 20, 2023

Dear Parents,

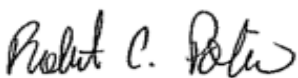
Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year here at Willow Ridge Elementary School. This handbook is designed to provide you and your family with important information regarding the daily operation of our school. We hope you find the information about our school's expectations, programs and services helpful to you throughout the school year.

Willow Ridge Elementary School strives for excellence in student achievement through a cooperative home-school relationship. We encourage you to become an active part of our elementary school experience as we work together to have a successful school year. All parents and guardians are asked to take the time to review the contents of this handbook.

Throughout the school year, your child's teacher will keep you informed of your child's progress using various forms of communication, such as online applications, emails, newsletters, and phone calls. If at any time you have a question about your child's learning experience, please reach out to our wonderful staff, who will be more than happy to assist you. As always, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Thank you for your continued support of our school. I look forward to another successful school year!

Sincerely,



Robert C. Polino
Principal

Sweet Home Central School District

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Mr. Donald Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Plant Services

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Mrs. Beverly McKim
Mrs. Erin Kennedy

SCHOOL NURSE

Mrs. Kristin Puff

FOOD SERVICE MANAGER

Mrs. Pam Licht

GUIDANCE/ COUNSELING/ SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mrs. Katie Barillari, Director of Special Education
Mrs. Wendy Januchowski, School Counselor
Mrs. Mariya Barnum, School Social Worker
Mrs. Katelyn DiRosa, School Psychologist

SCHOOL TELEPHONE

(716) 250-1575 Main Office
(716) 250-1576 Attendance desk

SCHOOL FAX

(716) 250-1585

Sweet Home Central School District Mission

“Sweet Home Schools...Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future. We empower students to be innovative, self-directed, curious, compassionate, resilient, persistent, lifelong learners.”



Follow us on Twitter @WillowRidge480

Admission of Students

Entrance age for pre-kindergarten shall be 4 years of age on or before December 1 (5 years of age for kindergarten), in the year in which the child enters. Parents of a child entering school for the first time must present a birth certificate, immunization certification and a physical exam certification before entrance is permitted. Transfer students need records from their previous school to enter. All students entering any building, even if they are transfer students, must submit two forms of current residency. Parents or guardians of incoming students must call the Sweet Home Central Registrar (250-1600) to set up an appointment.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival

Students may enter the building each morning at **8:40am**. Parents/guardians may come into the building if they need to visit the main office, parents will not be permitted to accompany their child into the building. Any student who is dropped off later than 8:50 will be considered tardy. A parent/guardian must accompany a child that arrives after 8:50 into the building to complete a late arrival card.

Parent Drop off:

- Follow the flow of traffic by keeping to the right around the parking lot to the designed drop off location. A map detailing the drop off location can be found in the back of this handbook.
- Pull up to the curb so that your child steps onto the sidewalk; all students should exit on the passenger side of the car.
- Cars should pull as far forward as possible within the student drop off zone (it is marked with a sign).
- It is illegal to pass a bus with its lights flashing red – even in a parking lot
- Only authorized Sweet Home CSD vehicles are permitted within the bus drop off zone
- **If stopping into the main office, only park in clearly marked parking spaces. If you must sign your student(s) into school, please use the front doors after parking in a designated parking space. Cars cannot be parked in the bus zone during any part of the school day.**

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at 2:45 p.m. Students being picked up report to the cafeteria. A staff member will release students to authorized adults who are minimally 18 years of age. Any adult picking up a child must have the school provided pick up number card. If the individual picking up a student does not have the pickup card, they may be asked to park. We ask that parents picking their child up from school do not arrive any earlier than 2:45.

Walkers, Bicycles & Rollerblades

A note signed by a parent is required for any child that is being permitted to walk or ride home from school. If the main office does not have a note on file, students will be required to take the bus home. Students who ride bicycles to school must comply with all traffic regulations. **This includes wearing a bicycle helmet.** Bicycles will be parked in the racks provided upon arriving at school, and will be left there until pupils are ready to go home after school. All bicycles should be locked. Rollerblading is not allowed inside the building. Students must take off roller blades before they enter school. **Helmets are also required for rollerblades.**

Attendance Policy

All children in New York State ages 6 to 16 are required to attend school. Regular school attendance is a critical factor in student success. Any time a student is absent, tardy or departs early from school, the parent/guardian must submit a signed, written reason for the absence/tardiness/early dismissal, specifying the date(s) and time, to the school district when returning to school.

Regular school attendance is a critical factor in student success. Research indicates a high positive correlation between consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion. Student attendance is monitored and parents are contacted if a child's absences exceed certain benchmarks. Academic performance may be affected if attendance or tardiness is excessive.

While parents are strongly encouraged to email or call in their child's absence, phone calls do not meet this requirement. A signed written excuse is required upon return to school after an absence or tardiness or prior to an early release.

Definitions:

Absent – The student is not in the school building for the entire day or does not attend the assigned class during the entire period of time allotted for that class.

Tardiness – Anyone arriving after 8:55 a.m. will be marked tardy. Students arriving at school after this time should report directly to the main office and will be given a pass to be provided to their teacher as they enter the classroom.

Early Dismissal – A student leaves the building prior to the designated dismissal time, or a student leaves a class prior to the designated dismissal time. The Sweet Home Central School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards

- **School Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to illness, death in the family, medical appointment, religious holiday, court appointment, counseling appointment, student's road test or college exploration.
- **School Unexcused:** Any absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories. Excuses such as family vacation, hunting, babysitting, oversleeping, missing the bus and working are not valid.

Excessive Absences and Tardiness:

Interventions may be initiated when a student is excessively absent or tardy from school. The interventions, which are listed below, are outlined in the district approved attendance plan.

Student Attendance, Processes To Address Excessive Absences/Tardies

At the start of each school year, parents/guardians will be informed of the district attendance policy and the importance of regular school attendance.

The following process will be followed in all buildings throughout the Sweet Home School District:

The person responsible for recording attendance records in each building will generate a report on a **monthly** basis. A student who reaches 5 days of absences in the first ten weeks of school, or 8 days of absences in the first twenty weeks of school, or 12 days of absences in the first thirty weeks of school will be flagged as a possible attendance problem and the first intervention will be implemented. The second intervention will be implemented when a student reaches 8 days of absences in the first ten weeks of school, or 12 days of absences in the first twenty weeks of school, or 15 days of absences in the first thirty weeks of school. Excessive early dismissals may be addressed as well.

When it is determined that intervention is necessary, the following steps will be taken.

District Wide Daily School Attendance Interventions

A. **First Intervention** - The first intervention is a letter sent to the parent/person in parental relation requesting more information about the student absences and/or tardiness. The letter will encourage the parent/person in parental relation to promote regular school attendance and to monitor future absences. The school attendance policy and a copy of the student's attendance record will be included in the mailing. Acknowledgement of receipt of the letter is expected and will be accompanied by a phone call from the school to the parent / guardian.

B. **Second Intervention** – If a second intervention is required, a meeting between the parent/guardian of the student and school officials will occur. The purpose of the conference is to determine a course of action that will improve the student's attendance. A copy of the student's attendance record will be included and discussed during the meeting. In the conference, the committee will create a plan to improve attendance which includes offering the parent assistance to address any issues that may be impacting the child's ability to attend school. This may include actions such as referral to the Family Support Center, referral community support services, or a re-evaluation of appropriate school placement (if the student receives special education services). The parent will also be informed of possible building actions should the attendance issue continue including home visits or a referral to Child Protective Services for educational neglect.

C. **Additional interventions** - If attempts to reach the parent/guardian through phone calls, letter and request for a conference have been unsuccessful, or if the student continues to be absent from school (**10 days absent in first ten weeks; 20 days absent in first twenty weeks; 30 days absent in first thirty weeks**), the district will conduct a home visit as a further attempt to reach the parent/ address the issue. When a family has received two interventions, and exceeds the total number of days allowable absences by the District plan, school officials will pursue formal sanctions such as referral to CSE for a re-evaluation of appropriate placement, or referral to Child Protective Services for parental neglect, if appropriate.

Breakfast and Lunch Program

Our cafeteria manager is Mrs. Pam Licht. Mrs. Licht and the cafeteria staff have developed a food service program that both meets the Federal Government's daily nutritional guidelines. **Breakfast is served daily for students in their classrooms from 8:40 - 8:55 a.m.** All students will have a 30 minute lunch period scheduled each day, with students rotating between the classroom and cafeteria on a regular basis.

Sweet Home Central School District is pleased to inform our families that all buildings across the district have qualified for a meal certification option. By participating in this national school breakfast and lunch program, all students enrolled at Willow Ridge are eligible to receive a daily healthy breakfast and/or lunch at school for no charge during the 2023-2024 school year. No further action is required by our families. Any child who would like a school lunch or breakfast will be able to participate in these meal programs without having to pay a fee or submit an application.

While eating in the classroom or cafeteria, students are expected to stay in their seats unless otherwise given permission by the supervising staff member or teacher. They are also expected to display responsible behavior at all times. While we encourage thoughtful acts of kindness, in order to help manage a safe and healthy eating environment students are not allowed to share food.

While in lunch, students are expected to:

1. Respect the staff.
2. Use quiet voices during lunch.
3. Keep their hands and feet to themselves.
4. Raise their hand when they need help.
5. Clean up after themselves. Trash should be placed in the garbage cans.
6. Ask for permission to leave their eating area.
7. Eat their own food and not share food with others.

Food Brought Into School

The District is committed to ensuring that all food and beverages available to students on the school campus during the school day support healthy eating. The foods and beverages provided to students during the school day will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snack in School Nutrition Standards. All Elementary Schools are Peanut/Tree Nut Free schools. Peanut Butter alternatives are welcome - Sunbutter is offered on the lunch menu each day.

Building Climate and Culture

Rights of Students

Students are expected to be aware of their rights and learn to exercise them responsibly. Sweet Home is committed to safeguarding the rights given to all students under state and federal laws. To this end, we believe students have a right to:

- A safe, healthy, orderly and civil school environment.
- Take part in all district activities on an equal basis regardless of age, race, religion, color, national origin, gender or disability.
- Present their viewpoint of a particular incident or event to appropriate school personnel.
- Access school rules and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from appropriate school personnel.

Expectations for Student Behavior

In order to promote a safe and productive learning environment, students are expected to comply with the expectations of the Sweet Home Central Schools Code of Conduct. A complete copy of Sweet Home's "Code of Conduct" is available in the elementary office. We expect students to strive to develop the principles of good character and positive behavior defined within the code. The Willow Ridge faculty and staff will work with students to instill behaviors, feelings and actions that reinforce these principles creating a positive learning environment.

In addition, Willow Ridge has specific guidelines of expected behavior for all students. Students are expected to maintain control of their **body, voice and space**. In the beginning of the school year, students are taught expectations for maintaining control of their body, voice and space across various school settings, such as the bus, cafeteria, classroom and playground. These expectations are reinforced through classroom conversations, during our daily morning announcements and within grade level or school wide community meetings.

School Response to Inappropriate Behavior

When students are exhibiting inappropriate behavior, there are many factors that are considered when determining an appropriate response. Our overall goal is to maintain a safe and productive learning environment for all students, including for those who are demonstrating inappropriate behavior. With that in mind, restorative measures are employed in situations where there is not an immediate threat to student safety or well-being.

Restorative measures refers to a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

On occasion, students may exhibit behavior that necessitates a removal from class. Students are removed only when their behavior poses a risk to their own safety, the safety of other students or staff, or, if the behavior is significantly impeding the learning of other students. When learning is impacted in the classroom, removal of a student will only be implemented if multiple attempts at less restrictive interventions have been attempted without success. When a student is removed from class for an extended period of time for a consequence, the student's adult caregiver will be informed of the removal.

Student Dress

All students are expected to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to dress appropriately. Our school staff is expected to model and reinforce acceptable student dress. The principal reserves the right to rule in those cases where a student's attire is inappropriate. The following guidelines should be observed by all students so as not to interfere with the learning process:

- Students cannot wear any form of head covering (i.e hat, bandana, scarves, etc.) in the building except for religious or medical reasons. Students and adults are expected to take off their hats as they enter the building.
- All articles of clothing which advertise, display or represent items depicting such themes as alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or items with abusive, suggestive or controversial themes are not to be worn.
- All apparel should be fastened properly and worn as designed.
- Halter and tube tops, bare midriff tops, short-shorts and see through garments cannot be worn.
- Shoes and sneakers are the recommended footwear.

Parents are reminded to check the attire of their children before leaving for school. In the event that a child's attire is unacceptable, we will offer the child three alternatives: 1) turn the item (i.e. a shirt) inside out, 2) wear something else they have in school or something available from the nurse's office, or 3) the child can call home to have a parent/guardian bring appropriate clothing to wear.

Celebrations

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday celebrations within the classroom are at the discretion of the teacher, while adhering to the following guidelines:

- Food is not allowed for birthday celebrations in any of the elementary schools across the district. Pencils or other non food items may be brought in to share.

- Teachers may choose to celebrate birthdays with activities such as a game or reading the child's favorite book.

Celebrations and Classroom Parties

Throughout the year, your child's classroom may celebrate a special holiday, event or the end of the school year. In these instances, students will be allowed to bring food items to school but **only from a pre-approved list**, which has been provided at the end of this handbook. Please keep in mind that all elementary buildings are nut-free and those products will not be permitted. In addition, some classrooms may have specific allergies and you will be notified of those by the main office prior to celebrations.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Assessment, Screening and Testing

All students must participate in the New York State Assessment Program which measures the knowledge, skills and understandings that all students are expected to have learned. **At the elementary school level, students are assessed in English Language Arts (ELA), and Mathematics in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. In addition, 5th grade students also take a NYS assessment in Science.**

Incoming kindergarten students participate in a screening process in the month of June. Students registering in the summer will be screened in August or the beginning of the school year. All PK-5 students new to the school district are screened within their first week of attendance.

Students in grades PK-5 will take periodic, school designed assessments throughout the year. These assessments usually occur at the end of a unit of study in a given subject area, or during previously defined district wide benchmark assessment periods. Assessments given during these time periods are diagnostic in nature, which means they are used to tailor instruction to the needs of your individual child.

At some point during your child's academic career, the school may recommend additional testing in order to identify learning needs specific to your child. When individualized testing is recommended, parent approval will be obtained prior to administering this type of assessment.

Instructional Framework

The workshop model is the preferred instructional framework utilized across the entire Sweet Home Central School District. This model of instruction begins with a mini-lesson, which is a short period of whole group, direct instruction lasting approximately 10-15 minutes. This is followed by a period of approximately 20-40 minutes, depending on the grade level, where students engage in independent practice, teacher facilitated guided small group work or student led small group collaboration.

English Language Arts (ELA)

Language development is a continuous process which contributes to the growth and development of each child as well as their understanding of the world in which they live. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are integral parts of the communication process and are taught and reinforced throughout the school day across all content areas. A balanced literacy approach is used as we build reading and language arts skills in our students. This approach provides students the tools and practice to become independent readers and writers. Our English Language Arts program requires all students to apply knowledge and skills for information and

understanding, literary response and expression, critical analysis and evaluation and social interaction. Ongoing student progress is recorded in a literacy profile and in an electronic database.

Mathematics

The New York State Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards (2017) reflect revisions, additions, vertical movement, and clarifications to the current mathematics standards. The Standards are defined as the knowledge, skills and understanding that individuals can and do habitually demonstrate over time because of instruction and learning experiences. These mathematics standards, collectively, are focused and cohesive—designed to support student access to the knowledge and understanding of the mathematical concepts that are necessary to function in a world very dependent upon the application of mathematics, while providing educators the opportunity to devise innovative programs to support this endeavor. As with any set of standards, they need to be rigorous; they need to demand a balance of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency and application and represent a significant level of achievement in mathematics that will enable students to successfully transition to post-secondary education and the workforce.

Subject matter is fairly consistent for each grade level and is listed below. As you would expect, complexity in each topic varies among the grade levels.

Operations and Algebraic Thinking
Number Sense and Operations
Measurement and Data
Geometry

State and Local Assessment Schedule

Elementary Testing Schedule 2023-2024

Operational Test		Administration Window	Make-up Dates	Scoring Dates	Final Dates to Submit Answer Sheets to Scanning Centers
Computer-based testing	Grades 3-8 English Language Arts	Monday, April 8 – Friday, May 17	Make-ups must be given within the testing window	Must be completed by Friday, May 24*	N/A
	Grades 3-8 Mathematics				
	Grades 5 & 8 Science				
Paper-based testing	Grades 3, 4, 6, 7 English Language Arts	Wednesday, April 10 – Friday, April 12	Monday, April 15 – Wednesday, April 17	Must be completed by Tuesday, April 30*	Tuesday, April 30
	Grades 3, 4, 6, 7 Mathematics	Tuesday, May 7 – Thursday, May 9	Friday, May 10 – Tuesday, May 14	Must be completed by Wednesday, May 22*	Wednesday, May 22
NYSESLAT Speaking		Monday, April 15 – Friday, May 24	Make-ups must be given within the testing window	Speaking is usually scored as it is administered	TBD
NYSESLAT Listening, Reading, Writing		Monday, May 13 – Friday, May 24	Make-ups must be given within the testing window	TBD	TBD

Health Services

We have a registered nurse available to administer first aid and assist with students' medical needs while in school. Students should not hesitate to talk with their teachers about visiting the school nurse if they are ill or need other medical attention. The school nurse determines if a child is too ill to remain in school and will contact the parent/guardian. Teachers are required to report any concerns about a student and their health or medical needs to the school nurse. It will be the nurse's responsibility to contact a parent or guardian regarding all health matters.

Medication Policy

The school nurse is the only school personnel who may dispense any medications.

ALL medications, including non-prescription drugs given in school, must be prescribed by the attending physician of the student.

A written order for prescription and non-prescription medications should include:

- student's name
- diagnosis
- dosage/route of administration
- time of administration
- for medications not given regularly, conditions under which medication should be given
- doctor's name, title, signature
- intended effect of medicine
- side effects

- other medications being taken
- doctor's name, title, signature
- intended effect of medicine
- side effects
- other medications being taken

Medication orders must be renewed annually or when there is a change in medication or dosage. The following regulations must be met:

1. Parents must deliver medicine directly to the school nurse. Do not send medicine with your child.
2. A **written** request from the parent and doctor is needed to administer medicine.
3. Medication must be in the original prescription bottle with pharmacy label and directions affixed.
4. A parent must report any change of time or amount of medicine.
5. School nurses will keep medicine in a locked drawer or file. Unused medication will be destroyed at conclusion of the treatment if the parent does not come to the school for the medicine.
6. Self-medication (i.e. inhalers) by the children is not permitted unless we have written documentation from a doctor.

These regulations also apply to over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol, cough drops and various cold medications.

School Physicals and Immunizations

All children in grades Pre-K, K, 2, 4 and all new entrants to our school district are required by New York State Health Law to have a physical examination. This may be performed by the child's primary health care provider or by our school nurse practitioner or school physician. New York State Department of Health – Bureau of Immunization (Public Health Law Section 2164) mandates updated proof of immunization for school entry. Proof of Immunization, history of disease, or serology must be presented at registration. Without proper documentation, students are not officially registered and will not be admitted to school. See Sweet Home's school calendar page 8 and 9 for more information.

Homework Policy

At the elementary level, the purpose of homework is to:

- to practice, review, and reinforce what students have learned;
- to apply skills to new situations and to real life;
- to promote organizational habits and self-management skills;
- to encourage continuous learning at home and in the community;
- to encourage discussion between parents and children regarding educational activities;
- to give parents the opportunity to show their children how much they value education; and
- to provide parents the opportunity to be involved in their child's academic progress.

Guidelines for Homework

- Aside from general homework or assignments required to be done outside the regular class time, class work designed to be done during school hours but not completed during the school day may also be considered as a homework assignment.

- The amount of homework to be assigned and the time anticipated to complete assignments will vary for the various grade levels and is determined by individual teachers. Time spent on homework should be commensurate with a student's abilities and needs. A general rule is that students will have about 10 minutes per grade level (i.e. 10 minutes at K, 20 minutes at grade 1 etc.) Contact the teacher if your child spends unusually long periods of time on his/her homework, or, if they appear to be struggling with the content.
- As an extension of learning at school, homework should require little to no support from an adult at home. With that being said, we encourage families to engage their child in conversation about homework that has been assigned. This is one way for families to understand what their child is learning in school.
- Children are encouraged to read nightly, even when it is not assigned by the teacher.
- If your child is unable to complete their homework independently or with minimal assistance, please contact your child's teacher immediately.

Tips for Parents

Homework can have a positive impact on a child's development of academic and organization skills when a parent:

- Believes that homework is a priority, provides reminders and checks in with their child to make sure the homework was completed.
- Helps the child prioritize assignments by starting with the one that is most difficult.
- Finds a quiet place away from distractions for the child to work at home.
- Provides minor help if the child is having difficulty. Students should be able to complete all homework assignments on their own, however they may require directions to be clarified by an adult.
- Acknowledges the child's effort each evening.

Miscellaneous Information

After School Child Care

Just For Kids child care after school from 2:50 pm to 6 pm. While attending, children participate in various activities, which include reading, help with homework, physical activities and games, etc. You can get more information about the program by contacting our main office at (716) 250-1575.

Cell Phones, Electronics and Personnel Items

We discourage students from bringing cell phones or electronic devices from home to school. Should your child bring one of these devices to school, they must be kept out of sight and not on their person. ***The school is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones or electronic devices.*** If students are seen with an unauthorized cell phone or electronic device, it will be confiscated and sent to the main office. Cell phones and electronic devices confiscated from students will not be sent home with the child; a parent or guardian of the child will be required to pick the item up at the main office in person.

We appreciate parent support in this area as we work to limit distractions to the learning environment.

Change of Address/Telephone

It is extremely important that every family maintain an up-to-date address and parent/guardian work telephone numbers in the school office. Parents should notify the school immediately in the event any household information changes. In the beginning of the year an emergency medical information form must be completed and returned to the school nurse. It is vital that this information is accurate in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Closing Procedures

If the cancellation of the school day appears possible during poor weather conditions, parents should turn to the following radio and television stations:

WBEN AM 930

WGR AM 550

WNED AM 970

WJYE FM 96.1

WYRK FM 106.1

WKSE FM 98.

WMJQ FM 102.5

WKBW TV Channel 7 – School Watch broadcast on “Good Morning Western New York” beginning at 5:30 am.

WIVB TV Channel 4 – “Wake-Up” beginning at 5 am.

School cancellation is decided only after a thorough check with the Weather Bureau, the district transportation office, local police and highway authorities. If school has to be closed earlier than usual, the school district will contact local radio, and TV stations and local police officials. If parents are not home when elementary youngsters are scheduled for early dismissal, those named as the student’s emergency contact will be notified. *Note: community education, after school activities classes are automatically canceled if school is closed that day.*

Family Support Center

The district’s Family Support Center, located in the district office, was created to provide families with support services that help ensure that children arrive at school ready to learn. For more information on the Family Support Center call 250-1228 or 250-1229.

Lost and Found

Throughout the school year, articles of clothing are often left at school. If your child has lost an article of clothing, please stop into the main office and ask to check our lost and found box. Students should inquire at the classroom first to seek lost articles or to add any lost items they may have found. We encourage parents to mark clothing, gloves, hats, boots, etc. for easy identification.

Parking

If you visit the school building during the day, **please park in the parking lot to the right of the building.** *The front drive of the building must be kept clear for buses, deliveries and emergencies.* It is especially important at the beginning and end of the school day that buses are able to get in and out without being blocked by parked cars.

Pets

For humane and sanitary reasons, pets **MAY NOT** be brought to school. Animals often carry allergens which trigger allergic reactions in children and adults. We kindly ask that parents who are dropping off or picking up their child from school do **not** bring their pet with them. While children enjoy seeing these animals, it creates congestion while entering the building and poses potential health risks for some students.

Telephone Use

Students who need to contact a parent during the day may come to the office and use the phone. Examples of when this may be appropriate include the following: if they have forgotten some essentials for performing well in school, need to remind parents of an after school activity or have questions about where they are supposed to go after school.

Parent Involvement

Willow Ridge Parent Teacher Organization

PTO Objectives:

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship. To raise the standard of home life.
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.
- To develop between educators, and the general public, such united efforts as well as to secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.
- The school and home partnership is the key to success for your child in school. The PTO provides many worthwhile experiences for students that just would not happen without their support. We urge you to get involved.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher communication is vital for student success. Parent-Teacher Conferences provide an additional opportunity for reporting student progress. All parents will be given an opportunity to schedule a conference during the school year. Conferences are scheduled in December for all students. Conferences are held in conjunction with the completion of the first progress report. Parents may contact their child's teacher to request a conference at other mutually agreeable times throughout the school year.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are issued at the completion of each trimester. Progress reports for trimesters 1 and 2 will be sent home with your child. Your child's final progress report will be mailed home the week after school ends. While these reports are the most traditional means for communicating student progress, we urge you to reach out anytime during the school year if you have any questions about your child's progress.

Student Activities

After School Activities

Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of after school extra-curricular activities. These activities run from 3:00- to 4:00 p.m. Bus transportation home may be provided for some of these activities. Written communication will go home with children regarding upcoming classes and programs.

***In order for students to attend an after school activity, they must have attended school for at least half of the day.**

Field Trips

Permission slips are sent home and are expected to be signed for students leaving the district. Occasionally we conduct field trips within the district. We send home notices about these opportunities but do not require parent permission to transport students within the district. For some field trips, parents are invited to attend for supervisory purposes. Younger or older siblings should not go on field trips.

Instrumental & Vocal Music

Willow Ridge offers opportunities for students to take instrumental music lessons. Eligibility for instrumental music instruction begins when a child enters fourth grade. Students can participate in either band or orchestra, but cannot be in both. Concerts are held in the winter and spring each year. There are two levels of band and orchestra at the elementary. These various ensembles are made up of students from the four elementary schools in the district. Beginning in January, the blue (4th grade) orchestra and band meet on Thursdays. The gold (or 5th grade) band and orchestra begin rehearsing on Monday starting at the end of September. All rehearsals take place after school. Transportation to the high school for rehearsal, as well as home after rehearsal is provided by the district.

Students in 4th and 5th grades can also participate in chorus. Chorus rehearsals are once per week, and there are several concerts and performances throughout the school year. Our music teacher will be sending out information regarding this opportunity.

Leadership

At Willow Ridge, we believe that there is leadership potential in every individual. Leadership is a choice, not a position, so at Willow Ridge, our goal is to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to identify their strengths and how they can use these strengths to have a positive impact on their school and community. To promote student leadership, we have adopted many aspects of the Leader in Me framework. Students at Willow Ridge are heavily involved in their own learning through goal setting and maintaining a leadership notebook. This notebook is shared with parents during conferences and throughout the school year. Students are also involved in decision making in the classroom, collaboratively developing a classroom mission statement and taking on leadership roles in the classroom.

In the beginning of the school year, students have the opportunity to apply for a school-wide leadership role or to be a member of an action team. Leadership roles meet periodically throughout the school year while action teams meet until their project or activity is completed. Information about when these groups meet will be outlined within the application.

Student Resources and Services

Academic Intervention Services (AIS)

The NYS Education Department mandates that all schools provide *academic intervention services* (AIS) as a supplement to general or core instruction to assist students consistently not meeting grade level benchmarks. Other services may be offered to support and improve student academic performance. This additional support must take place during the regular school day or after school. If it is determined that a student is in need of AIS support, parents will be notified in writing about the nature of the intervention, the frequency in which it will be provided, specific academic goals, and the assessments or measures utilized to determine qualification for AIS services. Parents will also have the opportunity to consult with the classroom teacher(s) or interventionist providing AIS, while also receiving quarterly progress reports.

In July of 2012 New York State made an update to the AIS regulations to ensure students receive systematic research based instruction on reading. The updated regulation is referred to as **Response to Intervention, or RtI**. While the RtI regulations provide additional guidelines in regards to academic intervention services in reading for students in grades K-4, at Willow Ridge we utilize these guidelines in developing our AIS services in both reading and mathematics in grades K-5. In an RtI model, students receive research based, small group instruction for a specific period of time. Throughout the intervention period, students' progress is routinely monitored to ensure that the intervention being provided is appropriate for the needs of the individual student. Routine progress monitoring allows for a responsive approach to providing students with targeted support. For more information about RtI or AIS at Willow Ridge, please contact the building principal.

Counseling

Counseling services are available to every child in our school. Our school counselor works closely with faculty and staff to meet the social and emotional needs of our students. The counselor is available to meet with students both individually, in small groups, and at times with the whole class to provide counseling and guidance support. Activities include assisting students in acquiring decision making and problem solving skills and improving study skills or dealing with other social/emotional issues that might impact academic performance. Parents are encouraged to contact our school counselor if there are any concerns with the social or emotional well-being of their child.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy addresses difficulties with functional tasks such as written communication and life skills (buttoning, opening containers, eating, etc.). Skills include areas related to visual perception, fine motor coordination, sensory motor areas (bilateral coordination, sensory, and body schemes), visual motor and strength.

Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy addresses gross motor needs related to mobility, balance, strength and the range of motion of the extremities. Students in need of these services are identified.

Speech Services

Speech Pathologists work with students who need remedial help with their speech and language development. Speech development includes sound production, fluency (stuttering) and voice quality. Language development includes both receptive/expressive language, augmentative communication, word finding skills and language

processing strategies. Services are provided on a pull-out (in the speech room) or push-in (the classroom) basis.

Beginning in kindergarten, a student's speech and language skill development is evaluated to determine if they could benefit from speech improvement. If a particular child is determined to benefit from speech remediation, the speech pathologist will contact parents to make recommendations for services.

Technology and Internet Access

Technology is used as a resource and tool to enhance learning in the classroom. Our Building network allows students to connect to the internet in every learning space. The use of technology for learning is a privilege that brings with it both rules and responsibilities.

It is impossible to control all materials on a global network, so it becomes the responsibility of the school staff and parents to set and convey standards that students should follow when using media and information sources. Teachers will explain to students our district's Acceptable Use Policy at the beginning of the year. A copy of this policy can be requested from the school office. Inappropriate use of this technology will result in denial or suspension of a student's right to use it.

iPads

Willow Ridge students are given an iPad, Charger cord and Charger block. Each iPad comes with a cover/case. Children are responsible for the care of their iPads. If an iPad, charger cord and charger block or case is lost or excessively damaged, a fee will be charged to replace. See the attachment at the back of this booklet for reviewing the regulations of the form that was signed.

Transportation

Bus Transportation and Rules

All students that reside within the Willow Ridge School attendance zone are provided with transportation to and from school.

Appropriate behavior is expected of all students while riding the bus since the health and welfare of all students is jeopardized when behavior is not appropriate. Students, parents, administrators and our transportation staff will work together to ensure all students arrive to and from school safely. Ridership is a privilege not a right. Bus drivers are encouraged to take steps that will reduce bus behavior problems or prevent problems before they occur. Drivers have the right to assign seats on the bus.

When boarding or exiting the bus students should practice the following safety procedures:

- Wait for the bus in an orderly fashion off the road and away from the bus.
- Wait at designated stops - not in an unsafe area.
- Cross in front of the bus - **never** in the back of it.
- Get on the bus in a safe and unhurried fashion.
- Move away from the bus immediately when exiting.

Expectations outlined in our school district's **Code of Conduct extend to the school bus**. In addition, students riding buses are required to follow these regulations:

1. Respect your driver and always follow his/her directions the first time they are given.
2. Go directly to your seat and remain in that seat unless instructed by the driver or bus aide to move.

3. Remain seated, keeping the aisle and exits clear.
4. Keep your hands and head inside the bus.
5. Carry only objects that can be held on your lap. Large band instruments, athletic equipment or class projects requiring additional seats should not be brought to school on the bus. Drivers may remove large objects from students for reasons of safety.
6. Encased sharp objects (pencils, pens, etc.) should not be used at any time on the bus. Glass containers prohibited.
7. Do not throw anything in the bus or out the window.
8. Do not eat or drink on the bus.
9. Use appropriate voice volume and language.
10. If you must cross the street after leaving the bus, always cross at a distance where you can maintain eye contact with the driver, in front of the bus, but do not cross until you receive a signal from the Bus Driver.
11. Vandalism of the bus or other students' property will not be tolerated.
12. Respect the rights of others and demonstrate responsible behavior.

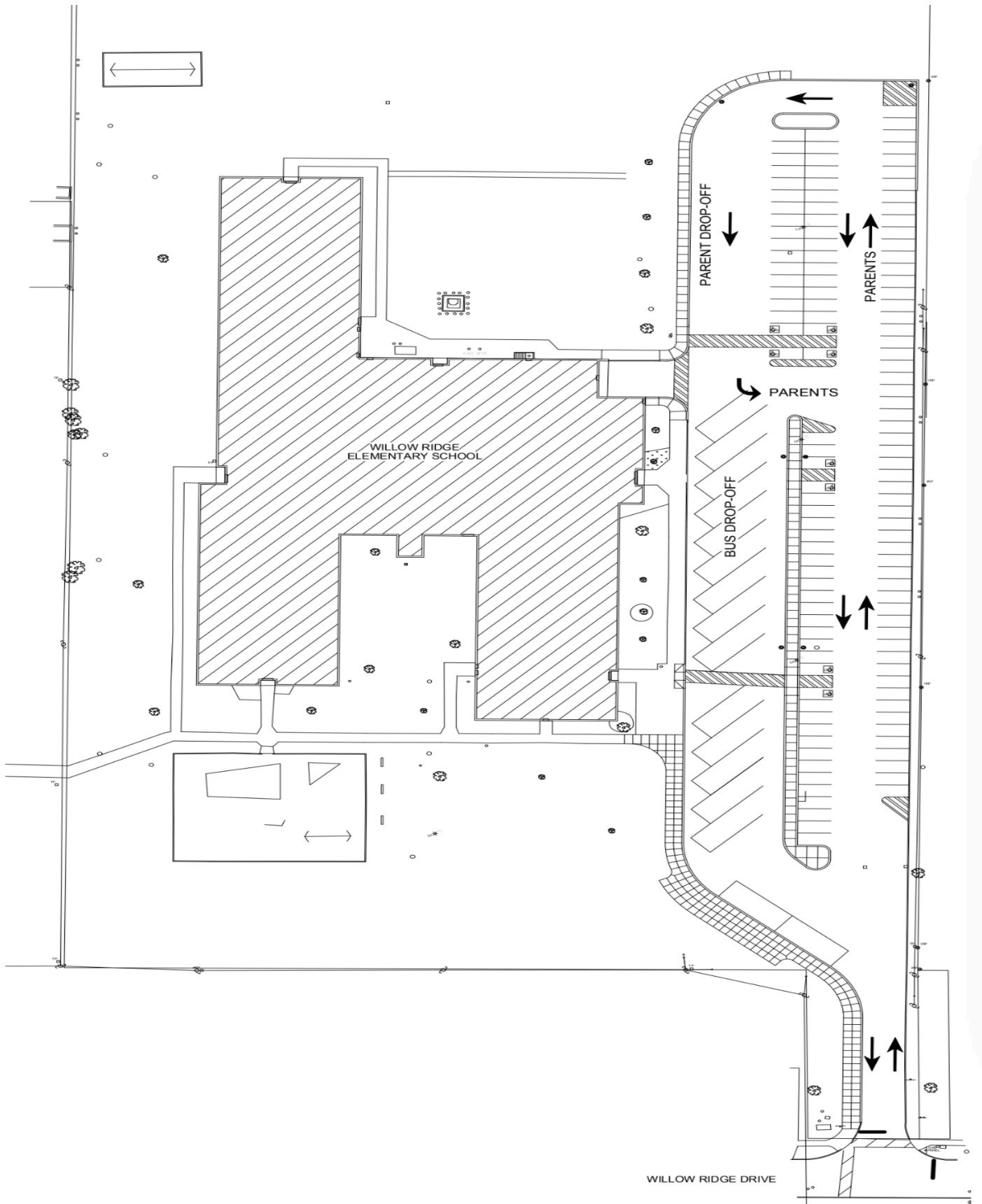
Route Request/Change Procedures

Students are picked up and dropped off at their regular stops each day. In the event that a student needs to be *regularly* dropped off or picked up at a different location (i.e babysitters, daycare, grandmothers, etc.), parents **must** submit a written request (forms are available in the school office) to the transportation office. We are legally responsible for each student's security and want to ensure their safety. For this reason, without a note your child will be sent home. It is a good idea to identify a neighbor where your child can go to the event where they are placed on a bus and no one is home when they arrive.

Visitors

Any individual who is not a pupil of Willow Ridge Elementary School or a Willow Ridge Elementary employee is considered a visitor. Individuals will not be allowed to enter any space other than the main office unless their visit has been previously scheduled with a member of the staff and approved by school administration. **All visitors must report to the school office before going to any other part of the school building. Visitors must sign in and wear a visitor badge.** All visitors will be required to provide photo identification upon signing in at the main office. The safety of our students and staff is our main priority, therefore the presence of unauthorized persons during school hours, before and after school is prohibited.

When entering the building, **all visitors must ring the bell and be granted access by a member of the office staff.** While we appreciate your demonstration of common courtesy, **we kindly ask that you do not hold the door open for individuals who are attempting to enter the building behind you.** Each person attempting to enter the building must be granted access by an office staff member. For the safety of all students and staff, these procedures will be strictly enforced.





Sweet Home Central School District of Amherst and Tonawanda

1901 Sweet Home Road • Amherst, New York 14228
(716) 250-1402

Important Information

Parents:

As a reminder, students will no longer be allowed to bring in food items to distribute to classmates for birthdays. Food can be brought in for other holiday and year-end celebrations, but **must be from the pre-approved list below**. Those items on the list are acceptable and peanut and tree nut free:

Pre-Approved Food List for Designated Holiday Celebrations:

- ❖ Raisins
- ❖ Fruit or Vegetables (Pre-cut at the store)
- ❖ Pretzels (Rold Gold: rod and braided twists. Utz – all varieties)
- ❖ Smart Food white cheddar popcorn (Black bag)
- ❖ Prepackaged Rice Crispy Treats (blue package)
- ❖ Popsicles (no cream centers)
- ❖ Nabisco Oreos (blue or gold package only)
- ❖ Nabisco Teddy Grahams
- ❖ Pepperidge Farms Goldfish crackers (original flavor only)
- ❖ Barnum's Animal Crackers
- ❖ Organic Fruit Strips (Wegmans or Cliff)
- ❖ Cheez It -original and white cheddar
- ❖ Cheese Nips- original and white cheddar
- ❖ Keebler Club Snack Sticks -original and Honey Wheat
- ❖ Nabisco Crackers- Triscuit (original) and Wheat Thins
- ❖ Enjoy Life Baked Chewy Bars- Caramel Apple, Caramel Blondie, Cocoa Loco, Sunseed butter crunch
- ❖ Enjoy Life Soft Baked Cookies- Chocolate chip, Double Chocolate Brownie, Gingerbread Spice
- ❖ Enjoy Life Enjoy Bites - Dark Raspberry, Dipped Banana, Sunseed Butter
- ❖ Jonny Pops Ice Cream Pops- several flavors

****Food Items brought in MUST be from this list OR preapproved by the nurse prior to the day of the celebration.**

We suggest that you stay completely away from food items as all the children can have:

- ❖ Pencils
- ❖ Erasers
- ❖ Stickers
- ❖ Fun Stuff from the Dollar Tree



Sweet Home Schools... Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future