

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2024-2025



Pleasant Hills Middle School

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WELCOME TO PLEASANT HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Pleasant Hills Middle School is home to the district's sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. As part of the West Jefferson Hills School District, we are members of the Jaguar Family. Our goal is for all students to display their **Jaguar P.R.I.D.E.** on a daily basis.

- Jaguars are **Prepared** each day for their classes and activities.
- Jaguars show **Respect** for staff members and fellow students.
- Jaguars value their **Integrity** doing what's right even during difficult times.
- Jaguars exhibit **Determination** when faced with difficult and challenging situations.
- Jaguars display **Empathy** seeking to understand what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes.

When our students display their **Jaguar P.R.I.D.E.**, it makes Pleasant Hills Middle School a better place to learn. Go Jaguars!

DIGNITY AND RESPECT PROGRAM

Pleasant Hills Middle School students and staff have committed to participating in the **Dignity and Respect Program**. The D&R Campaign came to life as a workplace initiative to promote a culture of inclusion, dignity, and respect at several corporations has now turned into a large scale movement that includes community partners, schools, anti-bullying campaigns, and educational and awareness groups. The mission of the program and the school is to teach individuals to have respectful interactions, build cultural awareness, and find common ground with individuals different from themselves. All staff and students take the Dignity & Respect Pledge, "I will do my part to make West Jefferson Hills School District a better place by treating everyone with dignity and respect". By working with Dignity and Respect Liaisons, participating in Dignity and Respect lessons, and engaging in group and individual discussions, students and staff will continue to work towards achieving our goals.

MISSION STATEMENT: THE DISTRICT'S STATEMENT OF ITS PURPOSE

Students are the primary focus of the West Jefferson Hills School District where, in partnership with families and community, the mission is to educate and prepare all students to become active, contributing members of society by providing a challenging, innovative, educational program guided by an exceptional staff in a safe, positive, caring environment of excellence.

WEST JEFFERSON HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT: PERSONAL CORE VALUES AND DISTRICT CORE VALUES

Through a collaborative process of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members, personal core values and organizational values were developed.

PERSONAL CORE VALUES

Respect

Our commitment is to earn the respect of others by building trust, honoring differences, and celebrating diversity. We are in this together!

We will expect the best of others by treating them the way we would want to be treated...

Empathy

Our commitment is to listen deeply before jumping to conclusions. We will work to understand first.

We will seek first to understand before being understood...

Integrity

Our commitment is model high moral behavior by being honest, fair, and forthcoming with ALL our interactions.

We will do the right thing AND we will do things right....

DISTRICT CORE VALUES

Learner Centric Focus

Decisions about people, policies, practices, and structures are decided by focusing on what is best for the learners.

Keeping Learners First

Personalization/Customization System

We believe that the future of education will be characterized by a customized and highly personalized system where the instructional methodologies are optimized for the needs of each learner.

Every learner, every day

Fostering Positive Relationships

We know positive relationships have the power to unleash untapped potential in people.

Honoring and Affirming Others

PLEASANT HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL: A PLACE TO LEARN AND GROW

Pleasant Hills Middle School is committed to the development of all middle school students. We align our practices with current research and professional organizations focusing on the unique needs of middle school students. As such our programs focus on the skills advocated by the Association for Middle Level Education. Therefore, we believe all our students should:

- Become actively aware of the larger world, asking significant and relevant questions about that world and wrestling with big ideas and questions for which there may not be one right answer.
- Be able to think rationally and critically and express thoughts clearly.
- Read deeply to independently gather, assess, and interpret information from a variety of sources and read avidly for enjoyment and lifelong learning.
- Use digital tools to explore, communicate, and collaborate with the world and learn from the rich and varied resources available.
- Be a good steward of the earth and its resources and a wise and intelligent consumer of the wide array of goods and services available.
- Understand and use major concepts, skills, and tools of inquiry in the areas of health and physical education, language arts, world languages, mathematics, natural and physical sciences, and the social sciences.
- Explore music, art, and careers, and recognize their importance to personal growth and learning.
- Develop his or her strengths, particular skills, talents, or interests and have an emerging understanding of his or her potential contributions to society and to personal fulfillment.
- Recognize, articulate, and make responsible, ethical decisions concerning his or her own health and wellness needs.
- Respect and value the diverse ways people look, speak, think, and act within the immediate community and around the world.
- Develop the interpersonal and social skills needed to learn, work, and play with others harmoniously and confidently.
- Assume responsibility for his or her own actions and be cognizant of and ready to accept obligations for the welfare of others.
- Understand local, national, and global civic responsibilities and demonstrate active citizenship through participation in endeavors that serve and benefit those larger communities.

*(Association for Middle Level Education, *Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, 2010, p.11-12)

6th GRADE TEAM GOALS

- Provide activities that facilitate a comfortable transition from elementary to middle school throughout the school year.
- Provide opportunities for students to achieve their academic potential.
- Provide students with interdisciplinary experiences to reinforce information across subject areas.
- Promote positive communication between home and school.

7th GRADE TEAM GOALS

- Provide opportunities for students to improve organizational skills.
- Assist students in developing and implementing problem solving techniques.
- Provide opportunities for students to utilize their skills across all content areas.
- Assist students as they work together to develop and demonstrate appropriate social interaction skills.
- Provide support as students develop respect for individual differences to enhance cooperation toward goals or tasks.

8th GRADE TEAM GOALS

- Foster and develop organizational skills and responsibility.
- Prepare students for the academic transition to high school.
- Implement and reinforce technology skills to enhance learning.
- Work together in teams to foster a unified, positive, and safe learning environment.
- Encourage, support, and challenge students to achieve higher academic standards.

CURRICULUM SUMMARY

GRADES 6, 7 AND 8

CORE COURSES – Reading/Literature, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science

- Core courses are conducted 5 days a week and are full year courses.

SPECIAL COURSES (Electives) - Students are also scheduled for the following special courses:

Applied Engineering and Technology, Applying Apps to Enhance Student Learning, Art, Career and College Readiness, Computer Software Applications, Drama (8th grade only) Family and Consumer Science, French, Health, Second Step Social and Emotional Learning, Spanish, Video Production, and Music.

- Students in grades 6 and 7 attend special courses for a six-week period (30 days)
- Students in grade 8 rank their elective choices and are assigned four elective courses each lasting for a period of 9 weeks (45 days)
- Students may select band, chorus, or orchestra

ADDITIONAL COURSES

- Physical Education/Health is a 30 day course for Grades 6 and 7. Physical Education/Life Fitness is a 45 day course for Grade 8.
- Band Ensemble, Orchestra Ensemble, and Chorus Ensemble are offered in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. The courses are five days a week and full year courses.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE WEST JEFFERSON HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

It is the responsibility of the total school community to create and maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, living, and teaching. Everyone in the educational process has the right to expect that the environment shall be safe, pleasant, and well organized. The climate should produce security and consistency through the establishment of reasonable rules and guidelines that require an interaction based upon mutual respect and cooperation. The emphasis should be on courtesy, consideration, and the fulfillment of all necessary obligations at all times.

STUDENT RIGHTS

Students do have rights. Having legal rights as persons and citizens, students may not be deprived of what the law gives them. These rights include the right to an education, the right to express their opinions, and the right to be free from invidious discrimination. They also have human rights as persons and participants in the educational community. These rights include the right to be treated with dignity by other participants and the right to contribute to the educational process. Minors are compelled by law to attend school until they are 17 years of age. They cannot be compelled to want to attend or like to attend, but all school personnel and parents should encourage students to attend at all times.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Student responsibilities include regular school attendance, conscientious effort in classroom work, and following school rules and regulations. Most of all, students share with the administration and faculty a responsibility to develop a climate within the school that fosters learning and mutual respect. No student has the right to interfere with the education of his/her fellow students. It is the responsibility of each student to respect the rights of all who are involved in the educational process. Students should express their ideas and opinions in a respectful manner.

The students' responsibilities are to:

- Be aware of all rules and regulations for student behavior and conduct themselves in accordance with them.
- Be willing to volunteer information in disciplinary cases and cooperate with school staff should they have knowledge of importance in relation to such cases.
- Dress and groom themselves so as to meet fair standards of safety, health, and common standards of decency.
- Assume that until a rule is waived, altered, or repealed it is in full effect.
- Assist the school staff in running a safe school for all students enrolled therein.
- Be aware and comply with state and local laws.
- Protect and take care of school property.
- Attend school daily, except when excused, and be on time for all classes and other school

functions.

- Make all necessary arrangements for making up work when absent from school.
- Pursue and attempt to complete the course of study prescribed by the state and local school authorities.
- Avoid inaccuracies in student newspapers or publications and avoid indecent or obscene language and topics that incite student unrest.
- Refrain from using disrespectful, indecent, or obscene gestures or language in direct contact with other people.
- Act in a responsible manner at all school events at our school and when visiting other facilities.

GENERAL CONDITIONS – Student Code of Conduct

The provisions of the student code of conduct apply to students any time they are under the proper supervision of school authorities (e.g. extra-curricular, field trips, etc.). Students and parents are requested to review the "Disciplinary Matrix" provided in the back of the handbook.

PLEASANT HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL: GENERAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY PERIOD

Pleasant Hills Middle School has an activity period built into the student schedule to provide additional support and enrichment for students in grades six, seven, and eight. Teachers in all content areas are available to work with individual students, small groups, and on certain days large groups of students. The activity period is also used for teacher-student mentoring time. The purpose of the activity period is to meet the needs of our students promoting growth.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Each school year, students are recognized for exemplary academic effort and performance. Three grade level programs are planned for the end of the school year to formally congratulate students who met one or more of the following academic criteria:

A. Perfect Attendance

B. Yearly Honor Roll

-High Honors with Distinction (4.0 Final Average)

-High Honors (3.5 to 3.99 Final Average)

-Honors (3.0 to 3.49 Final Average)

C. Department Awards

-One outstanding student recognized for each core subject area per team.

-One outstanding student recognized for each elective class per grade level.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

All notices of club meetings, athletic and social events, and general information for the day are announced during the *Jaguar TV Morning News Program*. You can view the Jaguar TV announcements by visiting <http://livestream.com> and search "PHTV". Announcements can also be accessed by visiting the PHMS webpage at

www.wjhsd.net. The School Messenger system is also utilized to send monthly updates to parents along with handouts and important information. In the case of an emergency or urgent message, parents will be notified. The principal must approve all posters advertising school-sponsored events. The Superintendent must approve any posters promoting community events.

ASSEMBLY

Throughout the school year educational assemblies are scheduled for students. Assemblies are held in the school gym or LGI room. Appropriate behavior for assemblies is required including: moving to seats quickly and quietly, listening to the speaker, clapping at appropriate times to show appreciation.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Listed below is a summary of various topics from the Attendance Policy.

The purpose of the attendance policy is to promote regular school attendance and to improve the academic achievement of students in the West Jefferson Hills School District. Regular school attendance is a prerequisite for school success. School success correlates highly with regular school attendance. A student's absence from class disrupts the continuity of the learning process and the benefits of regular classroom instruction, which once lost, can never be regained. Supervised classroom learning experiences, continuity of instruction, and personal interaction are essential ingredients in the education process. Participation in planned learning activities under the supervision of school personnel provides valuable personal interaction between students and teachers. Such activities are a vital part of the learning process in any public school.

ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS

Regulations covering absences, make-up work, and tardiness are as follows:

- A. Excused absences - These include absences for 1) Personal illness, 2) Urgent reasons (Serious illness or death in the immediate family), 3) Emergency medical or dental attention, 4) Absences approved in advance by the main office (Educational Trips), 5) Authorized religious holidays.
- B. Make-Up Work - Students may receive credit for work missed for the above reasons, provided it is made up satisfactorily and within a reasonable time. It is the student's responsibility to contact teachers after an absence to arrange for make-up work.
- C. Homebound Instruction - In case of prolonged illness of a student, the student's parent should contact the principal to request homebound instruction. Medical approvals are necessary.
- D. Unexcused Absences - Unexcused absences are ones other than those listed under A above.
- E. Athletics- Students participating in middle school athletics are required to arrive by 10 AM the day of a game, meet, or match to be eligible to play. If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they may be permitted to play with proof of documentation.

WRITTEN EXCUSES

PA School Code also requires that parents submit a written excuse when a child returns to school following every absence. This excuse must state the date(s) absent, reason for absence, and parent signature. If the excuse is not submitted within three (3) school days, the absence is coded as "unexcused".

You are under the age of 17. Therefore, "unexcused" absences are also "unlawful" absences. The School Code requires that school officials file a legal notice with the parent of any student who accumulates three (3) days of "unlawful" absence. If, after filing legal notice, you accumulate more days of "unlawful" absence, charges may be filed against the parent/guardian with a magistrate.

NOTIFICATION OF STUDENT ABSENCES

Parents may be contacted by Pleasant Hills Middle School staff to verify student absences. Please remember, you must still submit an excuse via Skyward when your child returns to school.

EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM

If a student has a record of excessive absenteeism (10 or more days in one school year as recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education) he/she is required to present a written statement from a licensed health practitioner stating the reason for the absence from school. A student who is required to present such proof must do so for every absence from school or illness. Failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as unexcused and

unlawful under the compulsory attendance laws of Pennsylvania.

Students who accumulate 18 or more absences (excused or unexcused) will not be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities. This includes dances, concerts, sports, etc. *This does not include medical absences.

TARDINESS

Students must be present in homeroom by 7:50 A.M. or they are marked tardy even if an excuse is presented. If a student arrives late to school, the student must report to the office for a late pass.

Students that are continually tardy to school may be disciplined in the following manner:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4-8 unexcused tardies | 1-3 Lunch Detentions |
| 9-12 unexcused tardies | After School Detentions |
| 13+ unexcused tardies | Saturday Detentions |

It is the desire of all at PHMS that students achieve success and prompt attendance assists students towards this goal. Please refer to the District Attendance Policy for additional information regarding tardies to school.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

A student may be excused for a medical or dental appointment providing the student secures an appointment card from the doctor or presents a written excuse from his/her parent prior to the time of the appointment. These excuses must be approved by the main office. Before leaving the building, the parent must sign the student out in the main office. Students must also sign in at the main office upon their return to school.

TRUANCY

A student absent without the consent of the student's parent is truant. This is an unexcused absence. Work missed during this absence must be made up. Repeated truancy may be cause for disciplinary action, suspension, expulsion, or legal action. One is truant if the student 1) leaves school grounds without permission. 2) is absent from school without prior permission from parent. 3) Fails to turn in an excuse within defined timelines.

Parents/Guardians of a habitually truant student who is at least 13 years of age are liable for the truancy and can be fined up to \$300 and court costs.

EDUCATIONAL TRIP

Student absences from school resulting from family vacations with educational value typically should not exceed ten (10) school days to be considered excused. Educational trips will be ruled excused if it is the opinion

of the building administrator a trip does have educational value and the following procedure is followed:

Educational vacations may be requested via Skyward.

B. The student obtains an approval form from the building administrator to present to teachers in order to obtain assignments prior to the absence. Teachers will initial the form to indicate that they have met with the student regarding assigned work.

C. All academic work is completed within a time period not exceeding the number of days absent as a result of the trip.

D. Leaving school early for a trip will not be excused unless an educational vacation form has been submitted and approved prior to the absence.

BULLYING

Pleasant Hills Middle School strives for a bully free environment. Students are to report acts of bullying to teachers, principals, and parents. All reports of bullying are investigated by the principal/vice principal and appropriate discipline, if warranted, is followed using the WJHSD Code of Conduct and Discipline Matrix.

Please refer to the following definition of bullying:

Bullying means an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in a school setting and/or outside a school setting, that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of doing any of the following: 1. Substantially interfering with a student's education. 2. Creating a threatening environment. 3. Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

BUS RULES AND REGULATIONS

The safety of all students to and from school is dependent on a common understanding and cooperative effort of parents, students, school bus drivers and school personnel. The West Jefferson Hills School District buses are equipped with video cameras and the taping of bus trips is in effect to enhance student safety.

Parents are urged to caution their children to obey the following rules:

- Students must obey bus drivers promptly as they are in full charge of buses and pupils while in transit.
- Students must be on time at the designated bus stops. Buses cannot wait.
- Students must stay off the roadway at all times while waiting for buses.
- Students must cross in front of the bus when crossing a highway.
- Students must wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter or exit the bus.
- Students must keep their arms and heads inside the bus at all times.
- Students must remain seated at all times when the bus is in motion.

- Any damage to the bus should be reported to the bus driver at once.
- Any student causing a disturbance on the bus may be suspended from riding the bus or receive disciplinary consequences for their actions.

BUS RULES AND REGULATIONS (Cont'd)

- Any student damaging a bus may be suspended from riding the bus or receive disciplinary consequences for their actions (refer to the discipline matrix).
- No smoking will be permitted on the bus. Violation of this regulation will result in disciplinary action.
- Students will be picked up and discharged only at their designated bus stop.
- Students may only ride the bus to which they have been assigned by the district. No unassigned students are permitted to ride the bus. If a student needs to ride another bus due to a family emergency or temporary child care need, the request should be submitted to the main office and requires administrative approval. Bus students may not walk home, to doctor's appointments, activities, or another student's home without written permission from a parent. This permission must be submitted to the office for approval on the morning of the request.

CAFETERIA

The school cafeteria is maintained as a vital part of the health program of PHMS. To encourage good nutrition, a well-balanced breakfast and lunch is offered. The cafeteria management and your fellow students will appreciate your cooperation in:

1. Depositing all litter in wastebaskets.
2. Returning all trays to the dishwashing area.
3. Leaving the table and floor around your place in a clean condition for others to use.

No food or drinks may be taken from the cafeteria. Fast food of any kind cannot be brought into the cafeteria. Students who abuse these or other cafeteria rules will be disciplined accordingly.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones, if brought to school, are to be turned off and left in the student's locker. At times, students will be permitted to use cell phones for teacher approved classroom activities. Students will return cell phones to their lockers once the activity is complete or the class period ends. If a student is caught using a cell phone without prior approval it will be confiscated and remain in the office until the end of the day. That student may also be assigned after school detention. Refer to the discipline matrix.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM

Academic dishonesty involves stealing something from another source and not giving credit to the source. It includes, but is not limited to, copying another's homework, submitting someone else's work as the student's own, copying any part of another's work without proper attribution, using or attempting to use unauthorized aids during a test or other academic exercise intended for assessment or evaluation purposes. Students will be required to re-do the assignment/project. Parents will be notified in cases of academic dishonesty and a discipline referral will be issued. Detention may be assigned.

CHILL PROJECT

This program is designed to provide mindfulness-informed preventative education and support to all students as well as faculty, staff and families. The Chill Project will facilitate learning with students on a variety of topics including core mindfulness, relaxed deep breathing, self-esteem and problem solving. Students are provided the opportunity to learn skills that will benefit them socially, emotionally and academically, not only during middle school, but through their high school years and beyond.

The CHILL Team will serve students, faculty, staff and families through the use of the CHILL Center. The CHILL Center is located on the ground floor of the middle school and will be the site of the preventative learning and practice.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT WEBSITE

Please visit the [Technology Support website](https://sites.google.com/wjhsd.net/wjhsd-support/home) for more information about this and other valuable information - <https://sites.google.com/wjhsd.net/wjhsd-support/home>

COMMON SENSE MEDIA

WJHSD utilizes Common Sense Media resources and curriculum to teach all students digital citizenship skills. Digital citizenship is a term used to define the appropriate and responsible use of technology among users. The Common Sense Media curriculum focuses on three core components to help students to become a digital citizen: respect, educate, and protect. Specific lessons are selected for each grade level. The lessons are provided by trained teachers, administrators and/or the school resource officer.

COMPUTER/INTERNET POLICY

The computer facilities in the WJHSD are provided for the use of the district's students, staff, and community members in support of the programs of the district. All users of the facilities are responsible for seeing that these facilities are used in an effective, efficient, ethical, and lawful manner. Violations of this policy are subject to

review by the district's administration. Disciplinary actions which may be taken, but not limited to, include: loss of computer use privileges, dismissal from computer-related classes, discipline under the discipline policies of the district, and/or appropriate legal action. The district may require the signature of the user and his/her parent or guardian on the Acceptable Use Agreement prior to allowing use of the facilities.

The Board supports the use of the Internet and other computer networks in the district's instructional program in order to facilitate learning and teaching through interpersonal communications, access to information, research, and collaboration. The use of the network facilities shall be consistent with the curriculum adopted by the school district as well as the varied instructional needs, learning styles, abilities, and developmental levels of the students.

Responsible use of the internet, computers, iPads, tablets, smart phones, and other portable electronic devices in accordance with specific district policy guidelines, is expected of all students at PHMS. These guidelines are distributed and explained to students by school faculty.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES/PARAPHERNALIA

The Board recognizes that the abuse of controlled substances is a serious problem with legal, physical and social implications for the whole school community. As an educational institution, the schools shall strive to prevent abuse of controlled substances.

The district shall work to educate, prevent and intervene in the use and abuse of all controlled substances through curriculum, classroom activities, community support and resources.

For purposes of this policy, **controlled substances** shall include all:

1. Controlled substances prohibited by federal and state law.
2. Look-alike drugs
3. Alcoholic beverages
4. Anabolic steroids
5. Drug paraphernalia
6. Any volatile solvents or inhalants, such as but not limited to glue and aerosol products.
7. Substances that when ingested cause a physiological effect that is similar to the effect of a controlled substance as defined by state or federal law.
8. Prescription or nonprescription (over-the-counter) medications, except those for which permission for use in school has been granted pursuant to Board policy.

For purposes of this policy, **under the influence** shall include any consumption or ingestion of controlled substances by a student.

For purposes of this policy, **look-alike drug** shall include any pill, capsule, tablet, powder, plant matter or other item or substance that is designed or intended to resemble a controlled substance prohibited by this policy, or is used in a manner likely to induce others to believe the material is a controlled substance.

The Board prohibits students from using, possessing, distributing, and being under the influence of any controlled substances during school hours, at any time while on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, and during the time spent traveling to and from school and to and from school-sponsored activities.

The Board may require participation in drug counseling, rehabilitation, testing or other programs as a condition of reinstatement into the school's educational, extracurricular or athletic programs resulting from violations of this policy.

Off-Campus Activities

This policy shall also apply to student conduct that occurs off school property and would otherwise violate the Student Code of Student if any of the following circumstances exist:

1. The conduct occurs during the time the student is traveling to and from school or traveling to and from school-sponsored activities, whether or not via school district furnished transportation.
2. The student is a member of an extracurricular activity and has been notified that particular off-campus conduct could result in exclusion from such activities.
3. Student expression or conduct materially and substantially disrupts the operations of the school, or the administration reasonably anticipates that the expression or conduct is likely to materially and substantially disrupt the operations of the school.
4. The conduct has a direct nexus to attendance at school or a school-sponsored activity, for example, a transaction conducted outside of school pursuant to an agreement made in school, that would violate the Student Code of Conduct if conducted in school.
5. The conduct involves the theft or vandalism of school property.
6. There is otherwise a nexus between the proximity or timing of the conduct in relation to the student's attendance at school or school-sponsored activities.

Anabolic Steroids

The Board prohibits the use of anabolic steroids by students involved in school-related athletics, except for a valid medical purpose. Body building and muscle enhancement of athletic ability are not valid medical

purposes. Human Growth Hormone (HGH) shall not be included as an anabolic steroid.

Students shall be made aware of the dangers of steroid use; that anabolic steroids are classified as controlled substances; and that their use, unauthorized possession, purchase, or sale could subject students to suspension, expulsion and/or criminal prosecution.

Reasonable Suspicion/Drug Testing

If based on the student's behavior, medical symptoms, vital signs or other observable factors, the building principal has reasonable suspicion that the student is under the influence of a controlled substance, the student may be required to submit to drug or alcohol testing. The testing may include but is not limited to the analysis of blood, urine, saliva, or the administration of a Breathalyzer test.

CYBER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The WJHSD Cyber Academy is designed for students who require mobility and flexibility during the school day due to out-of-school extra-curricular activities, medical issues, or unforeseen circumstances. All requests for cyber courses will need approval by the cyber coordinator, middle school administration, and parent(s). Cyber School students who violate school rules during school hours or on school issued devices will be subject to the established discipline matrix.

DISMISSAL

First trip bus students are dismissed from their last class period at 2:30 PM. Students who are walkers, car riders, or second trip bus students will wait until 2:35 PM to be dismissed. Students riding a school bus will exit through the main lobby doors. Students who are walkers or car-riders will exit near rooms 102 or 120 on the middle level.

DRESS CODE

PHMS is an educational institution designed to promote learning and growth. Dress guidelines have been formulated with this concept in mind. While we accept changes in fashion, we also expect our students to use good judgment when choosing clothing to be worn to school.

Clothing worn should promote, not hinder, the orderly process of education.

The following clothing is inappropriate for school use:

- Apparel which may be considered destructive to school property or generally unsafe for the health and wellbeing of other students is prohibited.
- Shorts and skirts must be of modest length, with their edges meeting the tip of the student's thumb

when the student's arms are straightened downward at their sides.

- Apparel which reveals the student's bare midriff, cleavage, or bra cups is prohibited.
- Tank Tops must have a strap at least the width of the student's own two fingers. See-through shirts lacking appropriate coverage or showing visible undergarments are prohibited.
- Outdoor headwear, including sunglasses, is prohibited in the building. Additionally, hoodies are not to cover the head while inside the building.
- Yoga pants and leggings are permitted provided that they are worn modestly with an over-garment that covers the bottom side and reaches the base of the student's wrist when the student's arms are relaxed and straightened downward at their sides.
- Pants and shorts/skirts must be worn at or above the hips in a manner that does not expose undergarments.
- Students may not wear costume apparel unless related to a school-related project and pre-approved

For purposes of clarification, bandanas, chains, and any apparel promoting drugs, alcohol, sex, or violence are prohibited. Clothing that is not within the dress code's policy, as deemed by administration, which disrupts the orderly operation of the school or presents a clear and present danger to the health and welfare of the school community is prohibited. Students will be required to comply with the dress code's standards and policies.

Any student reporting to school inappropriately dressed will be required to call home for a change of clothing or will be provided school apparel to wear for the remainder of the day. Additional consequences may be assigned.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If a student needs to leave school early for an appointment, they are required to bring a written note from their parent or guardian noting the date, time of dismissal and reason. Parents will meet their child in the main office. Sign-out procedures will be explained once you arrive.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

The West Jefferson Hills School District takes pride in providing a safe and nurturing environment to all of its students. The district has established procedures and plans to address emergency situations. These plans have been shared with first responders and the school staff. The Emergency Guidelines for the school district are reviewed on a regular basis and trainings are also held.

ALICE DRILLS

Recent research promotes updated emergency procedures to better protect students and staff during a crisis. One of the latest recommended programs is known as ALICE. ALICE is an acronym that stands for:

A – Alert
L – Lockdown
I – Inform
C – Counter
E – Evacuate

ALICE provides choices in emergency situations. The adult in charge, after assessing the situation, may decide that an opportunity is available to evacuate a danger area rather than remain in a lockdown situation or other option. Still, each incident presents a different set of circumstances. Students and staff will be trained annually.

BUS EVACUATION DRILLS

Bus evacuations are scheduled two times each school year. Students are instructed how to respond in the event of an emergency while riding the school bus. Students are made aware of multiple exits from the bus, the location of the fire extinguisher, and practice exiting the bus through an alternative exit.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills at regular intervals are required by law and are an important safety precaution. A fire evacuation plan is posted in each room. You should study the plan and become familiar with it. It is essential that when the first signal is given, everyone obeys orders promptly and clears the building by the prescribed route as quickly and quietly as possible. The teacher in your room will give instructions about exiting the building.

SEVERE WEATHER DRILLS

Severe weather drills are conducted once a year typically during the spring semester. Staff members inform students of how to respond during severe weather. Students and staff practice moving to safe areas and what actions to take in the event of a severe storm.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips, when used as a device for teaching and learning integral to the curriculum, are an educationally sound and important ingredient in the instructional program. Students on field trips remain under the supervision and responsibility of the WJHSD Board and are subject to its rules and regulations.

FLEXIBLE INSTRUCTION DAYS

Students will be expected to log into their Canvas accounts or use course packets to complete all assigned work.

Students not logging in or completing the packets will be marked absent for the day and an excuse will be required for it to be an Excused absence.

GRADING POLICY

PHMS uses five levels of achievement. These are:

A - Superior attainment of course objectives (90%-100%)

B - Above average attainment of course objectives
(80% - 89.9%)

C - Average attainment of course objectives (70%-79.9%)

D - Below average attainment of course objectives
(60%-69.9%)

F - Performance does not meet minimum standards

To help parents and students keep track of their academic progress, WJHSD utilizes a web-based grading program Skyward. This program enables up to date monitoring of student progress in all academic classes and daily attendance.

Report cards are issued at the end of each nine- week session. Letter grades are used to designate a pupil's progress. Parents must sign these reports and return them to school.

Student deficiency reports may be sent anytime during marking periods to parents of students who need some type of special attention. These reports do not necessarily mean that a student is failing, but a deficiency is noted which needs correction. Parents are encouraged to acknowledge the receipt of these notices.

Report Card Comments:

1. Outstanding Effort
2. Commendable Work Ethic
3. Cooperative/Positive Attitude
4. Actively Participates in Class
5. Shows Recent Improvement
6. Makes Good Use of Ability
7. Course Requirements Not Met
8. Homework/Projects Not Complete
9. Poor Classroom Performance
10. Low Test/Quiz Scores
11. Effort/Motivation Lacking
12. Inappropriate Behavior
13. Absences Limiting Class Performance

GUIDANCE

The purpose of guidance services is to help students in social, emotional, educational, vocational, and personal development. The counselor is in the guidance office daily during school hours. Conferences with students receive first consideration of the counselor's time and are scheduled whenever necessary. The counselor will assist the student:

- in recommending materials to improve study habits

- in planning schedules and school programs
- in making realistic curriculum selections and suitable plans for the future
- in offering aid in problems of adjustment--listen to students and discuss problems

HARASSMENT AND HAZING

The Board strives to provide a safe, positive learning climate for students in the schools. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the district to maintain an educational environment in which harassment in any form is not tolerated. **Harassment** shall consist of verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, national origin/ethnicity, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion when such conduct:

1. Is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment.
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance.
3. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's learning opportunities.

For purposes of this policy **hazing** is defined as any activity that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health or safety of a student or causes willful destruction or removal of public or private property for the purpose of initiation or membership in or affiliation with any organization recognized by the Board.

1. **Endanger the physical health** shall include but not be limited to any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping; beating; branding; forced calisthenics; exposure to the elements; forced consumption of any food, alcoholic beverage, drug, or controlled substance; or other forced physical activity that could adversely affect the physical health or safety of the individual.
2. **Endanger the mental health** shall include any activity that would subject an individual to extreme mental stress, such as prolonged sleep deprivation, forced prolonged exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual.
3. Any hazing activity, whether by an individual or a group, shall be presumed to be a forced activity, even if a student willingly participates.

HEALTH SERVICES

Health service is available to students for accidents and illness occurring only in school.

If a student becomes ill, with the permission of the student's class teacher, the student should report to the nurse. If the nurse is not on duty, the student should report to the main office. Parents will be called and asked to come for students too ill to remain in school. Students must never leave the building without permission. Students are not permitted to contact parents on their own using cell phones.

MEDICATION

Students are not permitted to carry medication to school.

This is for the protection of your child's health.

Administration of medication is a responsibility the school district views with considerable concern. Due to this policy for medication, we will not be able to administer non-prescription medication sent from home such as aspirin, Tylenol, cough syrups, cold tablets, etc.

Medication can only be given when:

- Written instructions are provided to the nurse by the physician.
- Medication is in a properly labeled container with student's name, dosage, time, etc.
- Parent's written permission is complete. Forms for this purpose are available from the school nurse.

Your pharmacist may provide a split portion of the medication in a separate, labeled bottle for the school. Ask your pharmacist when having a prescription filled.

Homeless Students

Under McKinney Vento all school districts are responsible for identifying students experiencing homelessness and connecting them with the resources needed to ensure academic success.

Who is considered homeless—Children or youth living in a shelter, transitional housing, hotel/motel, vehicle, campground, on the street or doubled up with friends or family due to a lack of alternate resources are considered homeless. An unaccompanied homeless youth is a child or youth that is not in the care of their parent or legal guardian and meets the definition of homeless under McKinney Vento.

Where can students experiencing homelessness attend school?—The law indicates that homeless students have the right to remain in their school origin (the school they attended at the time of the homeless episode or last school attended) through the end of the

school year in which they find permanent housing, provided it is in the child/youth's best interest.

If through consultation between the school and the family and/or unaccompanied youth it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest, then the student has the right to immediately enroll in the school that non-homeless students living in the attendance area in which the child/youth is actually living are eligible to attend, even if they do not have all of the required documentation. Additionally, unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to immediately enroll in school, even if they do not have a legal guardian present.

What supports can school districts provide to homeless students?—Homeless students are eligible for supports and services to remove barriers to educational success. This may include transportation to the school of origin, free meals, referrals to physical/mental health providers, clothing to meet school requirements, access to school supplies and resources, assistance with credit recovery, tutoring supports, expedited evaluations and assistance to participate in school activities including parent engagement opportunities, sports, club, etc.

Homeless Dispute Process—If at any time there is a disagreement about homeless status or best interest for school placement, the district will notify the family in writing of their determination that the family/unaccompanied youth is ineligible for McKinney Vento services. At this time, the district will provide the family/unaccompanied youth with the ability to dispute their determination. Throughout the dispute process, the child/youth, including unaccompanied youth, will continue to be educated in the school of origin or immediately enrolled in the school they are seeking enrollment in until the dispute process is finalized. Transportation will continue throughout the dispute process. All disputes will be sent to the ECYEH Regional Coordinator who will issue a determination. If any party is unhappy with the determination, they can elevate the dispute to the state coordinator.

What if I think that I am eligible for services under McKinney Vento?—Please contact the West Jefferson Hills School District homeless liaison:
Dr. Cassandra Bozek
412-655-8450
cbozek@wjhsd.net

If you require further assistance, please contact
Region 4 Coordinator:
Nicole Anderson
412-394-5894
Nicole.anderson@aiu3.net

HOMEWORK (Daily Posting)

Students and/or parents can access homework assignments through-Canvas. Please contact your child's teacher concerning access to Canvas.

INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS

Opportunities for participation in interscholastic sports begin at PHMS in the 7th grade. Students may choose to participate in the following activities: Football, Basketball, Track, Volleyball, Cross Country, Soccer, Cheerleading, 8th grade baseball and Wrestling. Each sport has specific guidelines which students will be advised of as needed. Students who choose to become involved in interscholastic sports should be aware that they must maintain academic and attendance eligibility to participate. Students must be in school by 10:42 A.M. the day of the event to be eligible to participate. Students must be academically eligible to participate. Also, students who are absent from school are not permitted to participate in after-school practice or games. Students who may be assigned to detention or suspension are also ineligible to participate on those dates.

INTRAMURALS

The intramural program is offered when scheduling permits. We hope that all students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 will become participants. Students' physical education teachers will give details about the program during the first week of school.

LIBRARY

The library has books and materials for assigned study and recreational reading. It is open for use during the entire school day and for a short time before and after school. See your teacher for a hall pass to report to the library during non-class times. Fines are charged for materials that are not returned.

LOCKERS

Each student is assigned a locker for the storage of books and equipment. It is the student's responsibility to see that the locker is locked at all times. Get materials from your locker for your morning classes when you arrive in the morning, and materials needed for afternoon classes after the lunch period. Students may visit their locker while going from their class to the cafeteria for lunch or from the cafeteria to their assigned afternoon class. Students may not visit lockers during the three-minute travel time between classes. The administration of PHMS has the right to search a student's locker when there is reasonable suspicion that it is being used for purposes other than storage of school materials. Students are not permitted to share lockers.

Keep your combination a secret. Friends will come and go but your locker combination will remain the same. Protect your possessions by keeping your combination private. Students who choose to give their locker combinations to others do so at their own risk.

RESTROOMS

Students may use the restrooms before and after school, between class periods only when necessary, or at the end of the lunch period. Students are expected to keep the restrooms clean at all times. Do not loiter, write on the walls, or damage the facilities in any way. If feeling ill, secure permission to report to the school nurse.

SKATEBOARDING, BICYCLE RIDING, ROLLER SKATING

School district property is posted that there is to be no skateboarding, bicycle riding, and/or roller skating on school district property. This regulation also includes scooters and roller blades. Do not bring these items to school.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAP)

The purpose of the Student Assistance Program (SAP) is to identify students who are experiencing significant personal problems that may place their academic success at risk. Examples of problems might include: substance use (drug/alcohol), depression, suicidal thoughts, and other crisis situations. The goals of the SAP are to develop an atmosphere of trust in which students will seek help from support team members; to assure students that problems are resolvable with help from professionals; and to acquire necessary counseling services for students in need before problems reach a crisis level. Assistance is always available by visiting the School Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, or by contacting a team member.

STUDENT COUNCIL

Student council is an organization through which the students may express their opinions, assist in the administration of the school, and participate in the

management of school enterprises. The council promotes leadership, initiative, and self-respect among its members and the entire student body.

STUDENT DROP-OFF/PICK-UP

Students may be dropped off and picked up before and after school on Dutch Lane (intersection with the middle school fire lane) and at the Prince of Peace Church Parking Lot on Old Clairton Road. Vehicles will be prohibited from entering the Pleasant Hills Middle School driveway and/or being in the traffic circle between the hours of 7:15 to 8:00 A.M. and 2:15 to 3:00 P.M. on days school is in session. The Pleasant Hills Police Department monitors the school driveway and enforces this restriction.

School buses will use Dutch Lane and then the middle school fire lane to drop off and pick up students each day. The fire lane is for authorized vehicles only. All other vehicles will use the main entrance on Old Clairton Road.

If you need to pick-up your child for an early dismissal, please use the main entrance on Old Clairton Road and be aware of the traffic signs in the middle school driveway. Please use the fifteen-minute parking spaces in the front of the building. You may sign your child out in the main office.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

The West Jefferson Hills School District has completed the installation of surveillance cameras inside and outside Pleasant Hills Middle School. The surveillance cameras will provide safety for our students, staff and property of the School District. The action was recommended by the Administration and approved by the School Board.

TITLE IX

It is the policy of the WJHSD not to discriminate on the basis of sex, handicap, age, race, color, and national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title

VI. For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact the Title IX Coordinator, or the Section 504 Coordinator, at 412-655-8450 or at WJHSD, 835 Old Clairton Road, Jefferson Hills, PA 15025

VALUABLES

Students, not the school, are responsible for their personal property. Students should not bring personal items or large amount of money to school. If a student has lost a personal item he/she may check in the lost and found, which is located in the lobby of the school. Students are reminded to use their school lockers for all materials.

VISITORS

All visitors must register in the office. A visitor's pass will be issued to qualified visitors. The West Jefferson Hills School District currently uses the Navigate 360 Visitor Management System. The Navigate 360 System provides an additional level of security for our students. Visitors who do not register are trespassing on school grounds.

WALKERS

The development of a respect for property and the rights of others is a prime aim of education. Students should take care not to trespass or destroy property. Students should walk on the left, facing traffic at all times. "Short cuts" through private property should not be taken. All students are expected to go directly home after school unless otherwise directed by their parent.

Walkers exit PHMS by using the exits near rooms 102 or 120 on the middle floor. Students are not permitted to use the main lobby entrance to exit the school at dismissal. This exit is for use by bus students only.

Walking students should time their arrival to PHMS no earlier than 7:30 A.M. Students should make sure they arrive by 7:50.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The Board shall establish fair, reasonable and nondiscriminatory rules and regulations regarding the conduct of all students in the school district during the time they are under the supervision of the school or at any time while on school property, while present at school-sponsored activities, and while traveling to or from school and school-sponsored activities.

The Board shall adopt a Student Code of Conduct to govern student discipline, and students shall not be subject to disciplinary action because of race, sex, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or handicap/disability. Each student must adhere to Board policies and the Student Code of Conduct governing student discipline.

This policy shall also apply to student conduct that occurs off school property and would otherwise violate the Student Code of Conduct if any of the following circumstances exist:

1. The conduct occurs during the time the student is traveling to and from school or traveling to and from school-sponsored activities, whether or not via school district furnished transportation.
2. The student is a member of an extracurricular activity and has been notified that particular off-campus conduct could result in exclusion from such activities.
3. Student expression or conduct materially and substantially disrupts the operations of the school, or the administration reasonably anticipates that the expression or conduct is likely to materially and substantially disrupt the operations of the school.
4. The conduct has a direct nexus to attendance at school or a school-sponsored activity, for example, a transaction conducted outside of school pursuant to an agreement made in school, that would violate the Student Code of Conduct if conducted in school.
5. The conduct involves the theft or vandalism of school property.
6. There is otherwise a nexus between the proximity or timing of the conduct in relation to the student's attendance at school or school-sponsored activities.

The building principal shall have the authority to assign discipline to students, subject to the policies, rules and regulations of the district and to the student's due process right to notice, hearing, and appeal.

Teaching staff and other district employees responsible for students shall have the authority to take reasonable actions necessary to control the conduct of students in all situations and in all places where students are within the jurisdiction of this Board, and when such conduct interferes with the educational program of the schools or threatens the health and safety of others.

Reasonable force may be used by teachers and school authorities under any of the following circumstances: to quell a disturbance, obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects, for the purpose of self-defense, and for the protection of persons or property.

DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS- A discipline matrix will be utilized to guide the consequences of various infractions. The Pleasant Hills Middle School Discipline Matrix is attached as an appendix to this handbook.

See the discipline matrix for offenses and consequences::

[Discipline Matrix](#)