

Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School Parent/Student Handbook 2025-2026

12872 Rock Point Road Newburg, MD 20664 Main phone: 301-753-1766 |
301-934-4091 <https://higdon.ccboe.com>

Principal – Mrs. Jennifer Posey

Assistant Principal – Ms. Tracy Fairman

SCHOOL HOURS

- Regular Day- 9:10 a.m.-3:40 p.m.
- 2 Hour Early Dismissal Day- 9:10 a.m.-1:40 p.m.
- 2 Hour Late Arrival- 11:10- 3:40 p.m.



Vision and Attendance Policies

Our Vision

Our school empowers all students to embrace learning, develop a growth mindset to achieve their personal best, and increase their capacity to build relationships using empathy and kindness.

At Higdon Elementary, we believe every child has unlimited potential and deserves an education that nurtures both academic excellence and social-emotional growth. Our dedicated staff works collaboratively to create a supportive environment where students feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, and develop the resilience needed for lifelong success.

Regular Attendance

Regular attendance is vital for students' educational development. If students are absent due to illness or another legitimate reason, a written excuse signed by a parent, legal guardian, or doctor is required. Students and parents/guardians have three days to verify tardiness or absences, after which they are coded as unlawful. Parents/guardians should call the school by the third day of consecutive absences.

Attendance Guidelines

- Full Day: A student is counted present for a full day if they attend four or more hours of the school day.
- Half Day: A student is counted present for one-half of the day if they attend at least two hours but less than four hours.
- Vacations: Scheduling vacations that result in unlawful absences is highly discouraged.

Lawful Absences Include:

Death in the immediate family, illness requiring a note from a parent/guardian or physician, court summons, hazardous weather conditions, religious holidays, state emergencies, student suspension, lack of authorized transportation, health exclusion, other emergencies judged by the Superintendent as a good and sufficient cause for absence

Unlawful Absences and Retention:

More than 10% unlawful absences in any marking period, semester, or academic year may lead to retention, chronic truancy may result in intervention referrals.

Communication Plan:

- Daily: Automated call-out
- After five absences: Notification to parents/guardians via letter, phone, or electronic communication.
- After 10 absences: Contact with parents/guardians, possible meeting to develop an attendance improvement plan.
- After 15 absences: Possible scheduling of a school attendance review.

Late Arrival: Students arriving after 9:10 AM must be signed in at the school office by a parent/guardian.

Emergency Closings: If weather conditions pose a hazard, schools may dismiss early, delay opening, or close for the day. Decisions are usually made by 5 AM. Reliable sources for school closing information include the school system's 24-hour information line (301-934-7410/301-932-6656) and website (www.ccboe.com). Notifications are also sent via School Messenger to parents with valid email addresses on file.

AlphaBest Program: For information, call 301-259-0175 to speak with Ms. Sandy Washington.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival

Students may enter the school at 8:55 AM. Parents should keep children in their cars until staff arrives. Early drop-offs are not permitted. Classroom instruction begins at 9:10am

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at 3:40 PM. Car riders are dismissed to the car rider area, and teachers escort bus riders to ensure they board the correct bus. **Day of transportation changes must be requested in writing via email at higdones@ccboe.com by 2:00 pm. We cannot accept changes by phone.**


Early Departure

Parents should provide a written note or email

higdones@ccboe.com and must sign the Early Dismissal form at the front office with a valid ID upon arrival. Early departures will not be allowed after 3:10 PM.

Emergency Information Card

Parents/guardians must complete and return an emergency card during the first week of school. Ensure accurate and working phone numbers are provided. Notify the school promptly of any contact information changes and update details in ParentVue. **Emergency contact persons do not have the authority to pick up your child from school for any other situations unless written permission has been provided prior to the pick-up.**

 **Custody Agreements:** Provide necessary court documents if applicable.


Health and Medication Policies

Illness and Medication

Students need to be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning to school after any illness, per current county, state, and federal recommendations, which are subject to change. Efforts should be made to minimize the administration of medicine in schools. Parents are encouraged to administer medication before school and/or after the child returns home.

To ensure the safe and efficient administration of medications to students who would otherwise be unable to attend school due to certain illnesses, conditions, or diseases, the following procedure is followed if a physician deems it necessary for a child to receive medication during the school day. Parents must provide the following:

- A completed Physician's Medication Order form containing complete written instructions from the prescribing physician, including the date of the order, identification of the drug by name, dose, time and circumstances of administration, length of time medication is to be continued, reason for prescription, and possible side effects.
- A completed form from parents/guardians stating the desire to have medication administered and relieving the school, its agents, employees, or representatives of any responsibility for ill effects resulting from the proper administration of the prescribed drug.
- An adult must deliver the medication to the school in the pharmacy container with all labeling information intact.

 If a child becomes ill during the day, the nurse or other school staff will notify a parent/legal guardian. If staff cannot reach parents, the individual(s) listed on the student's emergency card is called. Parents/guardians should ensure the school has accurate working phone numbers and that student emergency cards are updated. In emergency cases, students are taken to the nearest medical treatment facility.

Students with Medically Documented Food Allergies

To flag a child's food allergy in the cafeteria computer system, a physician must complete the Physician Order and Authorization for Food Allergy form. If the child's allergy changes, the school system will need an updated doctor's note to change or remove the restriction from the system.

Transportation

School Locator and Bus Routes

CCPS has a school locator feature on its website. School Locator allows the public to enter an address and see which elementary school an address is zoned for. It also indicates if the address is eligible for bus transportation to a particular school, what the bus number is, and where the closest bus stop to the address is located.

School Locator can be accessed at www.ccboe.com, under the Quick Links section located on the right-hand side of the home page.

The Charles County Board of Education requires students to attend schools in their geographical attendance zone. The request for the transfer of a student to another school must meet the regulations of the superintendent and be approved through Student Services.

Transportation and Bus Conduct

Transportation to and from school for eligible students is provided by CCPS as a privilege, not a right. Parents, students, and CCPS share the responsibility for transportation to and from school. Parents are responsible for their child's behavior and/or any damage caused to the bus or the property of others.

Children riding the bus are expected to behave in a polite and dignified manner. Inappropriate behavior on the school bus is considered serious misconduct with infractions handled at the school level. Parents will be notified if there is a bus infraction and of disciplinary action that will be taken. All parents should review with their children the basic safety procedures as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

CCPS may transport students by licensed school vehicles in the event of an emergency or as part of the school program to various school events such as athletic events, school orientations, or other academic programs. CCPS reserves the right to randomly videotape/audiotape students on school buses. The videotapes/audiotapes help monitor student behavior and evaluate bus drivers.

Cell Phones/Electronic Devices/Internet-Elementary School



Cell Phones/Electronic Devices

- Students may only bring their phone or device with approval from the Principal.
- Once approved, the student must keep their phone or device powered completely off (not on vibrate or silent mode) and inside their book bag, locker, or cubby throughout the entirety of each school day, unless other storage arrangements are made with the teacher.
- Once approved for school, students may use their phone or device on the bus or school-chartered vehicle, but use must not be disruptive or cause a distraction to the driver at any time. Sound must only be audible through headphones. Phone conversations are prohibited.



Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as tablets, games, etc., cannot be brought to school. Personal Electronic Devices is defined as any electronic device that can send, receive or display videos, images, text messages, GPS data, or any other communication in any form including but not limited to cell phones, smart phones, smart watches, location trackers or Bluetooth devices. If a student is found to be in possession of an electronic device, the device will be confiscated and sent to the office. The parent/guardian will be called to come and pick up the device.

Additional Guidelines Governing All School Levels- Please refer to www.ccboe.com for all resources. Internet and Cell Phone Resources - Charles County Public Schools

Food Services and Cafeteria Procedures

Food and Nutrition Services

Breakfast and lunch are served daily. Children have the option to buy or bring their lunch from home. When bringing lunch from home students should refrain from bringing glass bottles with their lunch. Students who bring lunch from home may buy milk; the cost of milk is \$.75. Please refer to the following website to access all information regarding school meals

<https://schools.mealviewer.com>

Parents are expected to ensure that their child's account is funded and will be notified by CCPS if the account falls negative, as well as when funds in the meal account fall below \$5. Visit www.ccboe.com for details and to read more about Rule 3842. Call 301-392-5570 with questions. Parents may send a note giving permission for snack items to be purchased using their pre-paid meal account. Snack items range from \$.50-\$.1.00 per item.



\$1.45

Breakfast Price

Elementary School

\$2.90

Lunch Price

Elementary School

Birthdays/Celebrations

When bringing outside food items to school for a student's birthday or as part of a classroom celebration, bring store bought, individually packaged treats. Treats that are homemade or not individually packaged with nutritional labels will not be served to students. Each grade level distributes birthday treats in the cafeteria during lunches. Since lunch shifts are only 30 minutes in length, we would appreciate you making arrangements with your child's teacher ahead of time, arrive to school at the start of your child's lunch shift. Additionally, teachers can only distribute party invitations at school if there is one for each student in the class.

ParentVue/StudentVue

ParentVue/StudentVue are an online system that allows parents, students, teachers, and administrators to monitor grades, assignments, class information, and more. Parents need their child's six-digit student identification number to use the system; student ID numbers are located at the top of report cards and are on file at school. Parents will need to register for initial system access at their child's school and provide photo identification. Parents can also email parentvue@ccboe.com with account or password questions.

Communication

Our weekly school-home communication folder, "Thursday Folders," contains a variety of information that includes sign-and-return papers. Parents should check these folders for important information regarding their child's educational program. Moreover, grade levels send home monthly newsletters. Schoolwide information will be sent through the Higdon Newsletter through email every other week.

Contact the school with any questions, concerns, or feedback. Teachers and administrators are available for conferences as needed. When a conference is desired, contact the teacher/school to request scheduling. Conferences are scheduled around teachers' non-instructional and planning time.

Grading System

Report cards are issued at the end of each nine-week period for students in Kindergarten through Grade 5. Pre-K students receive report cards each semester. (Refer to the CCPS school calendar for interim and report card dates.)

Grade Levels PreK 4, K, 1 and 2

- M – Meets Expectations (84.5% to 100%)
- P – Progressing (69.5% to 84.4%)
- N – Needs Improvement (69.4% and below)

Grade Levels 3 to 5

- A – Excellent (90% - 100%)
- B – Good Performance (80% - 89%)
- C – Satisfactory Performance (70% - 79%)
- D – Minimal Performance (60% - 69%)
- F – Unsatisfactory Performance (Less than 60%)
- I – Incomplete

In addition to marking achievement in the content areas, teachers are required to mark performance indicators for each content area on the report card. These performance indicators show how a student is performing on specific skills and strategies that fall within the content areas. This is indicated using the scale below:

3

Mastery

2

Partial Mastery

1

Not Showing Mastery

Parent conference for elementary students is scheduled for Monday, November 10, 2025.

50% Policy

For all grade levels, no grade lower than 50% may be entered on any assignment or assessment if the student has demonstrated a good faith effort.

A good faith effort may be demonstrated by a genuine attempt to meet the expectation or requirement of the entire assignment in a timely manner.

A genuine attempt may be evidenced by the student:

- displaying persistence
- striving for accuracy
- showing time on task
- using an alternative method to solve a problem
- regardless of accuracy

A zero may be entered when a student:

- has not turned in any work
- has been found to have engaged in academic dishonesty
- has failed to demonstrate a genuine attempt

Homework

1

Purpose of Homework

- Provide practice of previously taught skills
- Facilitate communication with families about classroom learning
- Support the development of personal responsibility and study habits

2

Time Recommendations

If homework is offered, it should follow developmentally appropriate time limits and not exceed the following guidelines:

- PreK: No assigned homework
- Kindergarten–Grade 1: Up to 10 minutes per day
- Grades 2–3: Up to 20–30 minutes per day
- Grades 4–5: Up to 30–45 minutes per day

These time limits include all content areas and are separate from daily independent reading, which is strongly encouraged.

Student Services and Behavior Programs

Student Services

Charles County Public Schools offers a variety of resources in support of students and families.

Our Pupil Personal Worker (PPW)-Mrs. Donna McPherson and is at Higdon every Tuesday.

School Psychological Services- Dr. Higdon has a certified school psychologist, Mr. Scott Paterson. He is at Higdon every Tuesday and Thursday. Our school psychologist provides crisis intervention; counseling for individuals and groups; individual student assessments; and consultations with teachers, parents, and administrators as well as referrals to, and consultations with, appropriate community agencies and professionals.

Counseling Services- Dr. Higdon provides counseling services to our students. Our certified school counselor, Ms. Raynell Vesselles can help parents & students in the areas of academics, personal decision making, and career planning. They work with parents, administrators, teachers, and community resources to provide the best educational experiences for students.

Tier 1- Positive Behavior Incentive Program (PBIS)

Dr. Higdon Elementary utilizes the Positive Behavior Incentive Program (PBIS) as the foundation for school-wide discipline. This approach emphasizes positive reinforcement and rewards to encourage students to adhere to school expectations. Students receive "Husky Bucks" daily to recognize and reinforce positive behavior choices.

Throughout the year, these expectations are reviewed with students and prominently displayed throughout the school. Teachers reinforce these expectations in classrooms. Periodic PBIS events are held to further reinforce student understanding and commitment to our behavioral standards.

Higdon Huskies HOWL in the classroom:

H - We are Honest

- Tell The Truth
- Be Fair
- Treat Others Equally
- Do Your Own Work

O - We are On task

- Listen Carefully
- Follow All Directions
- Stay Focused
- Be Prepared

W - We Work together

- Share Ideas
- Help Others When Appropriate
- Be An Active Participant
- Have A Positive Attitude

L - We Lead by example

- Be Responsible
- Show Respect
- Make Good Choices
- Think About Others

Student Code of Conduct

Please refer to all policies in the [CCPS 2025-2026 Parent Handbook/Calendar CodeOfConduct_2526.pdf](#).

⊗ Weapons

Parents should review the Board of Education's policy regarding weapons at school with their children. Weapons including any implement that could potentially cause injury including, but not limited to, guns, ammunition (bullets, BB's, pellets or other projectiles), knives, razors, lasers, clubs, tear gas, mace, pepper spray, tasers and others, including toy items that may come with costumes are strictly prohibited on school grounds or buses for any reason. In all cases involving weapons, law enforcement will be notified to investigate the situation.

Bullying And Harassment- Students and parents are encouraged to report bullying and harassment to any teacher or administrator and to fill out a complaint form found in the Student Code of Conduct ([BHI.pdf](#))

Field Trips and School Activities

Field trips are integral to our school program and enhance classroom learning by providing real-world experiences. These trips are planned in coordination with classroom instruction and serve various educational purposes.

1

Student Participation

Students must bring a signed permission slip from a parent or legal guardian to participate in field trips. Additionally, there may be a fee for transportation and admission, and refunds will not be given for absences on the day of the trip. Teachers will send home detailed letters before each trip outlining necessary items to bring and any special instructions.

2

Chaperone Guidelines

Adult chaperones may be needed to accompany teachers on field trips. Due to space limitations on buses and venue restrictions, not all parents who wish to chaperone may be accommodated. However, every effort is made to provide fair opportunities for parental involvement throughout the school year. All chaperones are required to comply with guidelines set by the Charles County Board of Education, including passing a background check annually. Smoking is strictly prohibited during school-sponsored field trips.

3

Eligibility

Only students enrolled at Dr. Higdon Elementary are eligible to participate in school-sponsored field trips. Parents who choose to transport additional children will not be considered part of the official school trip.

Fundraising

Throughout the school year, Dr. Higdon Elementary holds school-sponsored fundraisers to support student learning and school initiatives. These fundraisers, organized by the PTO, contribute directly to providing cultural experiences for students and assisting teachers with special projects and instructional needs. The proceeds from fundraisers are instrumental in enhancing the educational environment at Dr. Higdon Elementary, and we appreciate the support of parents and the community in these efforts.

Library/Media Center

The Library/Media Center plays a crucial role in meeting the educational needs of all students from Pre-K through Grade 5. It is important to note that lost or damaged library books must be paid for to facilitate replacement. Volunteers are welcome to assist with shelving books and helping students check in and out using the computer. Please contact the Media Specialist if you are interested in volunteering.

Lost and Found

The Lost and Found area is in the hallway outside the gym. If your child misplaces an item, encourage them to check the Lost and Found area. To aid in the retrieval of lost items, parents are encouraged to label their child's belongings with their name. Unclaimed items are periodically displayed, and any remaining unclaimed items at the end of each quarter will be donated to charitable organizations.

Parent Groups/Volunteers

Dr. Higdon Elementary has a vibrant and active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). Regular meetings are scheduled to encourage parental involvement and participation. Parents are strongly encouraged to join and contribute to PTO activities, as collaborative efforts enhance opportunities for student success. Information regarding meetings and PTO activities is communicated through the school newsletter, phone messages, email, school Facebook page and flyers. Volunteer service is highly valued at Dr. Higdon Elementary as it enriches the educational experience for students. Parents, grandparents, and community members are welcome to volunteer, though they must adhere to CCPS policies, rules, and procedures. All volunteers who have contact with students, including those participating in field trips, must undergo a background screening annually. For more information about volunteering, please contact the school office.

Recess

Recess procedures are determined by the classroom teacher and typically include a 30-minute free play period daily. During inclement weather or extreme cold, students remain indoors. If your child needs to stay indoors due to medical reasons, please notify the classroom teacher in writing with appropriate documentation.

School Pictures

Professional individual pictures by Lifetouch Photography are taken early in the school year. If a child is absent or if parents are unsatisfied with the developed pictures, a picture make-up day is scheduled. Class and personality pictures are taken in the spring with no make-up dates provided.

Visitors

Parents/guardians and all visitors must present photo identification upon arrival and sign in using the ScholarChip system in the main office to obtain a visitor's badge. To protect the privacy of other students, and to maintain a safe learning environment, parents/guardians may not use any audio or visual recording devices at any time.

- **Classroom observation:** Visits to classrooms must be scheduled in advance, and parents/guardians may request up to two classroom observations per grading period, each lasting up to 45 minutes and accompanied by an administrator.
- **Disruptive Individuals:** Principals have the authority to deny access to disruptive individuals or those without a valid reason for visiting.

Withdraw/Transfer of Schools

Parents/guardians must notify the school office at least 48 hours in advance of a student's withdrawal. They should bring the name and contact information of the new school for record transfer.

Standard Response Protocols (SRP)

CCPS utilizes a Standard Response Protocol (SRP) which is based on the response to any given situation, not on individual scenarios. Staff and students practice responses during the school year. We ask that all visitors exit the building along with the students and staff during all drills.

The Charles County public school system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices. For inquiries, please contact Dr. Mike Blanchard, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (students) or Nikial M. Majors, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (employees/ adults), at Charles County Public Schools, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646; 301-932-6610/301-870-3814. For special accommodations call 301-934-7230 or TDD 1-800-735-2258 two weeks prior to the event. CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).