



Darien Public Schools

Elementary Family Handbook



2025-26 School Year

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District Administration and Board of Education

Darien Central Office Administration

Eric Byrne, Ed.D, *Interim Superintendent of Schools*

Amy Fedigan, Ed.D, *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, K-12*

Shirley Klein, *Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services*

Marjorie Cion, *Director of Human Resources*

Richard Rudl, *Director of Finance and Operations*

Jeff Adams, *Director of Information Technology*

Kevin Munrett, *Director of Facilities*

Jennifer Falcone, Ed.D, *Director of Elementary Education*

Scott McCarthy, Ph.D., *Program Director for Special Education and Student Services*

Laura Straiton, *Program Director: Early Learning Program*

Darien Board of Education

Meetings are held bi-monthly on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 pm in the Darien Board of Education Meeting Room, 35 Leroy Avenue. Please be sure to check the website to confirm the dates, times, and locations of specific meetings.

The schedule of meetings, agendas, and meeting resources are available on the school district website on the [Board of Education webpage](#).

Agendas of regular meetings are posted the Friday prior to the meeting on the district website and listed in a legal notice on the [Darien Town Website](#). Complete agendas, including meeting materials, are posted on the school district website no later than 3:00 pm on the day of the scheduled meeting.

Board of Education meetings are viewable on Cablevision Channel 1305 (formerly 78) and live-streamed via YouTube. Previous meetings will remain archived on the [District's YouTube Channel](#).

Board of Education Members

Name	Email
D. Jill McCammon, Chairperson	JMcCammon@darienps.org
Robin Nelson, Vice Chairperson	RNelson@darienps.org
Sara D. Parent, Secretary	SParent@darienps.org
David A. Brown	DBrown@darienps.org
Greg D. Grambling	GGrambling@darienps.org
Kadiatu M. Lublin	KLublin@darienps.org
Dennis J. Maroney	DMaroney@darienps.org
John R. Sini, Jr.	JSini@darienps.org
Joanna Walsh	JWalsh@darienps.org

Non-Discrimination Statement

Darien Public Schools is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. Darien Public Schools does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, alienage, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. The Darien Public Schools does not unlawfully discriminate in employment and licensing against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction.

District Mission and Vision

Our Mission

Inspiring a love of learning in all students so they develop as critical thinkers and innovative creators who contribute to the world with integrity and purpose beyond themselves.

Our Vision

Preparing all students today to thrive in a changing world tomorrow.

The Vision of the Graduate

In March of 2020, the Darien Public Schools assembled a coalition of stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and Board of Education members—with the purpose of defining a [Vision of the Graduate](#), a statement of what it means to our community to prepare students from prekindergarten through high school graduation for a successful future. Two aspirations emerged from community input: That all students would have the confidence and capacity to be self-directed, independent adults who live purposeful, happy, fulfilling lives, and that they would become citizens who contribute collaboratively and innovatively to their local and global communities.

In an era of rapid change to education and to the workforce, the Darien Public Schools recognized the need to identify through this Vision the skills and dispositions required to raise compassionate, resilient problem-solvers and leaders: Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity.

The Darien Public Schools is committed to giving all of our students multiple opportunities to master these competencies and to acquire these dispositions, throughout their experiences in our schools and their engagement with our curriculum, from kindergarten through to graduation. As a result, we believe we will graduate individuals who have a strong academic foundation and are prepared to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired to cast and fulfill a purposeful vision for themselves, their community, and the world.

We believe our graduates will be forever shaped by the learning environments we provide within our school district. From these environments, our graduates will take with them an understanding that the successful pursuit of meaningful ideas requires:

Communication	Creativity	Curiosity	Empathy	Independence	Integrity
<p>Effective collaboration will depend on your ability to listen with a discerning ear and express your ideas with clarity and passion.</p> <p>Communication is a two-way exchange.</p> <p>Listen before you speak.</p> <p>Hear what is behind the words.</p> <p>Craft your communication with purpose and choose your words carefully - they hold great power.</p> <p>Know that your actions also tell your story. Find your own voice and dare to use it to build your community and change your world.</p> <p><i>Seek to understand and be understood</i></p>	<p>Pursuing new ideas will inspire you and others.</p> <p>Connect all that you have learned in order to generate novel thinking, design solutions, and innovate.</p> <p>Embrace the trial-and-error process.</p> <p>See mistakes as opportunities.</p> <p>Problems are solved by thinking about what can be rather than what has been.</p> <p>Seek and appreciate the beauty within each discipline.</p> <p>Believe in your vision and give form to your ideas.</p> <p><i>Dream, imagine, and invent</i></p>	<p>Approaching the world with childlike amazement will lead you to new questions and inspire learning for life.</p> <p>Pursue knowledge as it provides the bedrock for thinking.</p> <p>Turn your mind to inquiry while pursuing your passions.</p> <p>Engage with others' thinking and question with persistence to deepen your understanding.</p> <p>Commit to fearless exploration of the unknown because it will open doors to new possibilities.</p> <p><i>Wonder and ask why</i></p>	<p>Understanding other people's experiences will enable you to form meaningful relationships and empower you.</p> <p>Open your heart and mind to the ideas and feelings of others and, as a result, learn more about yourself.</p> <p>Radiate kindness.</p> <p>Act with compassion.</p> <p>Embrace diversity and stand up for others and for inclusion.</p> <p>Honor the humanity of each person and contribute to a community that provides all with a sense of belonging.</p> <p><i>Grow in the light of human connection</i></p>	<p>The life you build for yourself will be founded on how much you trust and rely on your unique talents and thinking.</p> <p>Self-reliance frees you to become who you are meant to be.</p> <p>Persist when you encounter obstacles and know that you can seek guidance to help you grow.</p> <p>Set goals and work hard to reach them.</p> <p>Diligence has its own rewards.</p> <p>Confidently choose what is best for you, balancing life's demands.</p> <p><i>Forge your own path</i></p>	<p>Those who earn the respect of others conduct themselves honestly and adhere to principles in the face of adversity and social pressures.</p> <p>Tell the truth no matter how difficult.</p> <p>Accepting Responsibility earns trust and reveals strength of character.</p> <p>Advocate for justice.</p> <p>Lead by example. Know who you are and let your actions speak for you.</p> <p>Develop your moral compass and demonstrate the courage to honor it.</p> <p><i>Do what is right, even when no one is watching</i></p>

General Information

School Address and Phone Numbers

<p>Hindley Elementary School 10 Nearwater Lane Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 1323</p> <p>Principal: Ross Cooper Asst. Principal: Cristina Bras-Taylor Asst. Principal: Mary Beth Giannattisio</p>	<p>Tokeneke Elementary School 7 Old Farm Road Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 9666</p> <p>Principal: Ryan Betts Asst. Principal: Samantha Swift Asst. Principal: Danielle Cummings</p>
<p>Holmes Elementary School 18 Hoyt Street Darien, CT 06820 (203) 353 4371</p> <p>Principal: Paula Bleakley Asst. Principal: Alex Harvey Asst. Principal: Anmarie Galgano</p>	<p>Middlesex Middle School 204 Hollow Tree Ridge Road Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 2518</p> <p>Principal: Kate Dimoulas Asst. Principal: Dr. Felicia Bellows Asst. Principal: Tim Monahan Asst. Principal: Dr. Caitlin O'Keefe Program Director, SESS: Sarah Ramaley</p>
<p>Ox Ridge Elementary School 395 Mansfield Avenue Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 2579</p> <p>Principal: Chris Melillo Asst. Principal: Jaclyn Welsh Asst. Principal: Maya Feldman</p>	<p>Darien High School 80 High School Lane Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 3981</p> <p>Principal: Ellen Dunn Asst. Principal: Keith Keeler Asst. Principal: Alison Mullane Asst. Principal: Mark Mazzone Asst. Principal: Meghan Dube Program Director, SESS: Jeannine Newell</p>
<p>Royle Elementary School 133 Mansfield Avenue Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 0044</p> <p>Principal: Natasha Torre Asst. Principal: Katie Risk Asst. Principal: Amanda Kearney</p>	<p>Fitch Academy 6 Thorndal Circle Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655 3981 ext. 2804</p> <p>Lead Teacher: Matt Pavia</p>

School Hours:

Hindley Elementary School	8:25 a.m. - 2:55 p.m.
Holmes Elementary School	9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Royle Elementary School	8:25 a.m. - 2:55 p.m.
Ox Ridge Elementary School	9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Tokeneke Elementary School	8:25 a.m. - 2:55 p.m.
Middlesex Middle School	7:57 a.m. - 2:22 p.m.
Darien High School	7:40 a.m. - 2:17 p.m.

Calendars

Digital calendars, with the option to subscribe, are available on our [district website](#). Printable versions of the [school year calendar](#) are available. This school year will include six early release days to support staff professional learning in the elementary schools.

Bus Transportation, Parent Pick-up, Play Dates

Bus routes are published in local newspapers and posted on the website about one week before school begins. In order to ensure the safety of our students, it is essential that parents and caretakers who receive students at their bus stops are there consistently and on time. For young riders, parents should have a back-up plan in the event that they, or their caretakers, are delayed so that youngsters can be discharged from the bus. If an adult is not at a bus stop, kindergarten students will be returned to school.

Due to the number of students riding the buses, parents are asked to refrain from requesting a change in the regularly scheduled bus assignment. Per Board of Education policy, transportation is provided to and from the student's primary residence.

Transportation Concerns

Questions or complaints about school transportation services or safety issues should first be directed to Danielle Powers, Director of Transportation, Darien Board of Education at 203-656-7465. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, a parent may appeal to Richard Rudl, Director of Finance and Operations: 203-656-7405. Should a satisfactory resolution still not be reached a parent may

appeal to the Superintendent of Schools: 203-656-7412. Subsequent appeal levels include a Darien Board of Education arbitrator, Darien Board of Education, Connecticut State Department of Education.

The District uses the electronic message system, School Messenger, to notify parents/caretakers of bus delays or issues. If you are interested in being notified of a bus status, please check out the FirstView app in the District's website under "[Transportation](#)" for more information.

Parent Pick-Up

Darien Public Schools uses [Pikmykid](#) to notify classroom teachers how each child in their class is going home each afternoon. **This is the app that parents must use for any change to a student's dismissal.** Please create an account. Directions for doing so are [here](#). All students who are eligible for a bus will be assigned to a bus route and the assigned bus number will automatically be your child's default setting in Pikmykid*. If your child will be going home a way other than their default, parents are required to log in and enter their child(ren)'s dismissal plans for that day.

It is possible to set an ongoing recurring dismissal plan in Pikmykid (i.e. if your child will always be a pickup or always walk home). Please click [here](#) if you'd like to see a step-by-step visual on how to create a recurring change. If you need help with navigating Pikmykid, please note that Pikmykid has 24/7 Parent Support. You may contact them at support@pikmykid.com or directly in the parent app by going to the Account Tab and choosing Contact support.

**Please note that school staff are unable to address inquiries about bus routes, bus drivers, pick up/drop off locations or times, or other transportation concerns. Those questions should be directed to our Transportation Coordinator, Dani Powers at dpowers@darienps.org.*

Playdates

If you are arranging a playdate for your child immediately after school, please note any dismissal changes directly in Pikmykid. The parent of each child involved in the playdate must enter this change in the database. **Please note - children going on playdates must either be a pickup or a walker, no student can ride a different bus than the bus assigned to them from the Transportation Office and they must use the bus stop assigned to them.** To avoid confusion for your child, please plan ahead and ensure your child understands their dismissal plans each morning before coming to school. If you are unable to make a dismissal change in Pikmykid by 2:00pm, please call the main office, so we may notify the teacher of the change.

[Here](#) is a full resource folder regarding Pikmykid that you might find helpful.

Aspen: School Information Management System

ASPEN is a Web-based school information management system to collect contact and medical emergency information for your children. Emergency information will be completed in ASPEN by each student's parent or guardian and must be updated annually. Emergency information will be maintained for each student and will contain all necessary data such as names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the parent or guardian, family physician, designated hospital, and names of relatives or neighbors to be contacted if the parent cannot be reached.

Please follow these steps prior to your child's first day of school:

1. Create an ASPEN account if you don't already have one. Accounts are issued to one parent for the whole family. Go to <https://www.darienps.org/aspen>, to complete and submit the form to get your account activated. Allow at least 48 hours for processing. You will receive your username/password at your provided email.
2. If you have already established an Aspen account, please go directly to Aspen to log in and update your information.
3. When you receive your login information, log into Aspen and select the link on the main page:

[Click here to update Parent Information and Permission Signoff](#)

Review the contact and emergency medical information for each of your children to assure it is complete and accurate. Your initials are required on the pages of Release Agreements, Electronic Environment User Agreement, Student Device Agreement and Handbook and Open Ends Permission (Open ends only applies to DHS). You will then select submit and your information will update to Aspen.

4. *Step-by-step instructions are available: [ASPEN RESOURCES: PARENT](#)*

Darien Public Schools Website

The School District [website](#) contains extensive information about every aspect of the school system and detailed descriptions of the curriculum. Parents may access overviews of our [curriculum](#) for all areas through the EduPlanet platform.

The site also provides links to information about our schools released throughout the school year by the State of Connecticut and the Federal Government.

Bicycle and Scooter Riders

Connecticut State Law requires ALL BICYCLE RIDERS UNDER THE AGE OF 14 TO WEAR HELMETS. If riding to school, students are to lock their bikes or scooters on the bike racks located in the back of the school. Once bike/scooter riders arrive at the sidewalks leading to the school building, bicycles and scooters are to be walked the remaining distance to school. Riders should stay on the sidewalks and

should never cross the bus loop or entrance to the parking lot. Only students in grades 3, 4, and 5 are permitted to ride their bicycles and/or scooters to school.

Dogs and Other Animals

Dogs and other family pets are not allowed on school property during school hours. Although we love our pets, we ask that you not bring your dog with you when walking to school to drop off or pick up your child(ren). Many children are uncomfortable around dogs and other pets and we would like arrival and dismissal to remain as welcoming and safe as possible.

Visitors and Volunteers

Visitors and volunteers are welcome at school for pre-arranged meetings or events. When arriving for a pre-arranged meeting or event, please sign in with the campus monitor at the main entrance. The campus monitor will provide you with a Visitor Badge. This badge must be worn at all times when on school grounds.

If you are bringing a forgotten belonging or lunch to school for your child, you may leave it with our campus monitor and he will ensure that it gets to your child. This helps limit disruptions to class learning activities during the day. Please ensure any items brought during the day and left with the campus monitor are labeled with your child's full name, grade, and teacher. Parents may not visit their child for lunch or recess. The school campus is closed to all visitors who do not have an appointment during school hours. This includes the fields, playground, and picnic tables.

Emergency Weather-Related Information

During adverse weather conditions, the decision to cancel school, delay the opening of school, or dismiss school early is primarily informed by the need to ensure the safety of students and staff. The final decision will ultimately be made by the Superintendent of Schools. Conditions are assessed between 4:00-4:30 a.m. unless weather conditions the previous evening warrant a cancellation. A decision will be based upon information from a variety of sources, such as the weather service, the police, and the public works department. Rest assured that we will do our very best to make timely, rational decisions, based upon the best weather and travel information available at the time. Your understanding and cooperation is always appreciated when these decisions are made.

Cancellations

If schools must be canceled due to weather-related emergencies, the decision will be made no later than 5:30 a.m. You can expect the announcement of the cancellation within a half-hour on radio and TV stations, as well as on our website <http://www.darienps.org>.

SchoolMessenger is a service that provides e-mail, voice, and text communication to the community. Information can be found at www.SchoolMessenger.com/tm

You will be contacted by SchoolMessenger by e-mail and phone using the information provided by you in your Aspen account. However, to receive text messaging from SchoolMessenger, **you must opt in for this service.**

In order to participate in this service you must indicate your willingness to receive text messages to your phone. The process is simple and only takes a few seconds to complete:

- Simply text any one of the following words to the number 68453: "subscribe," "opt-in," or "yes."
- You should receive the following reply message: "You are registered to receive approx 3 msgs/mo. Txt STOP to quit, HELP for help."

**You will need to repeat the opt-in process for ALL wireless numbers that you wish to include.*

In addition to performing the opt-in process above, you'll want to ensure that the district has your wireless number(s) in our student information database. **Please log onto Aspen and update your information with the "contact and medical emergency information" workflow.**

**To opt out of all text messages from SchoolMessenger, reply with STOP to the opt-in message or visit www.schoolmessenger.com/tm.*

Please note that when school is canceled, no activities will be held in the buildings and all school-related and extracurricular events will be canceled. A decision to close schools for the day, once made, will not change.

Delayed Openings

If schools are delayed due to weather, the decision will be made by 5:30 a.m. The decision to have a **TWO-HOUR** delayed opening is based upon the available information that travel and weather conditions are expected to sufficiently improve to open schools. However, parents should continue listening to designated radio and TV stations following the announcement of a delayed opening. If travel conditions do not improve or if they worsen, the delayed opening may be changed to a full day closing. Any such change will be communicated via the media and website sources.

Early Dismissals

If weather forecasts and conditions indicate that an early dismissal would be in the best interest of our students and staff, we will communicate such a decision via radio, TV, our website, and School Messenger. These sources will provide more information than can be gained through a call to the schools or central office. An early dismissal decision will be made no later than one hour prior to the

dismissal. Again, media announcements will occur within a half-hour. It is critical that parents have an emergency plan in place for child care should children be dismissed early from school.

Please note that there are two early dismissal times for weather-related emergencies depending on the timing of the arrival of inclement weather:

(1) In the event of a **Morning Emergency Dismissal** due to inclement weather, all students, including kindergartners, will be dismissed according to the following schedule:

Darien High School: 10:30 a.m.

Hindley, Royle & Tokeneke: 11:00 a.m.

Middlesex Middle School: 10:30 a.m.

Holmes & Ox Ridge: 11:30 a.m.

All students will have the same bus stops as they had in the morning. No lunches will be served at school on those days, but elementary students will have a snack prior to dismissal.

For Early Learning Program (ELP) ONLY: ELP students at Ox Ridge will be dismissed at 10:00 a.m.

In the event of an **Afternoon Emergency Dismissal** due to inclement weather, all students, including kindergartners, will also have the same bus stops as they had in the morning. Lunch, however, will be served to all students. Please note that this early afternoon emergency closing time is the same time schedule as when we have regularly scheduled early dismissals for conference days and before certain holidays. Also note that, regardless of whether we have an emergency closing or a scheduled early dismissal, kindergarten students will be dismissed along with all the other students in grades 1-5. The afternoon emergency dismissal times are:

Darien High School: 12:20 p.m.

Hindley, Royle & Tokeneke: 12:55 p.m.

Middlesex Middle School: 12:30 p.m.

Holmes & Ox Ridge: 1:25 p.m.

For Early Learning Program (ELP) ONLY: ELP students at Ox Ridge will be dismissed at 12:00 p.m.

The school system itself, except for a major emergency or extraordinary road conditions, will remain open until the usual closing time. For everyone's safety, we suggest that you allow your child to be transported home on his/her regular school bus.

Chain of Communication Protocols

The Darien School District's communication protocols help to promote direct, open, and respectful interactions so that problems and concerns can be worked out quickly and efficiently. The district encourages any and all questions from parents and residents regarding school matters. The communication protocol starts with the staff member closest to the situation, as that person will usually have the most information. At times, additional personnel are required to resolve specific situations. Staff should return initial communication within 24 school hours.

For a more detailed Chain of Command, please [click here](#).

School Lunch, Snacks, and Milk Program

Our school lunch program is run by [Chartwell's](#). Children who would like to purchase lunch can go through the lunch line to make their purchases. Hot lunches are available to students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The cost at the elementary schools is \$4.05. Milk is available to students who bring a lunch for \$0.75. Pricing for all school levels may be found on [this web page](#).

You may fund lunch accounts by sending cash or a check to school with your child (made payable to the "Darien School Lunch program"). Students can hand funds to any lunch cashier. Please include your student's ID on checks and correspondence.

If your child will be purchasing lunch at school, please click [here](#) to set up an online account. You may add money online via our online payment system, [MySchoolBucks](#). There is a \$3.95 online processing fee for SY25-26 and a deposit limit of \$120. The cafeteria will never deny your child a meal, even if the account is negative. However, when a student's account is at negative \$25 or more, the student will not be allowed to charge any snacks, drinks or a la carte items on their account.

Parents applying for Free and Reduced lunch can find the application under the [School Lunch Program](#) webpage. [Other Languages](#)

Please note that the monthly lunch menus will be posted on the [district website](#) for review. Parents are encouraged to monitor the lunch account balances closely to ensure money is available for purchases.

All classrooms are designated NUT FREE as we work to provide the safest environment for our students with life-threatening nut-based allergies. This means that all snacks must be NUT-FREE. At this time, students may bring food with nuts to the cafeteria for lunch as nut-free seating is available in this larger space.

Please click [here](#) for current menus, meal costs, and contact information for our district food services team.

For questions about Free and Reduced Lunch, please contact Dani Powers (dpowers@darienps.org)

Celebrations

Darien Elementary Schools may have NON-FOOD celebrations for birthdays, holidays, and other school events. Consistent with our approach to healthy lunches through our district lunch program and healthy habits through our district Physical Education and Health curriculum, school celebrations for holidays, birthdays, etc. will not be food-based. Each grade level team will share fun ways to celebrate birthdays and holidays throughout the year.

School Attire

Students should dress within reasonable limits so that their dress does not jeopardize the health or safety of the wearers or others, or cause distraction or disruption of the educational process as determined by the Administration.

At the elementary level, during the winter months, all students are expected to dress warmly with appropriate footwear. Children will be going outdoors during recess, except in inclement weather. Every item should be labeled with your child's name. Appropriate footwear and shirts must be worn at all times.

Beyond this, the following prohibitions are given for elementary and secondary student school attire ([Policy 5280](#)):

- Clothing that may jeopardize the health or safety of the wearer or others includes, but is not limited to, spiked or studded bracelets, oversized or multi-finger rings, chains, belts or any other article of attire with spikes or studs attached.
- Clothing that is provocative or revealing or which conveys, supports or implies the use of drugs or alcohol, sex, violence, profanity, hateful or discriminatory messages is inappropriate for school wear.
- Attire or accessories that contain overly offensive or disruptive writing or pictures likely to unduly disrupt the educational environment, or that constitute "fighting words," are prohibited.
- Provocative or revealing clothing that reveal the abdomen, chest, or undergarments; see-through clothing, and shorts, miniskirts, or pants that reveal the upper thigh or undergarments.

Teachers may ask students to remove their head coverings. Head coverings include but are not limited to scarves, bandannas, masks, headbands, visors, kerchiefs, athletic sweatbands, hats, caps or hoods. Approved coverings worn as part of a student's religious practice or belief, or medical need, shall not be prohibited under this policy.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend school every day school is in session. Regular school attendance is critical to a student's academic success as well as their social and emotional well-being.

Connecticut General Statute 10-198a provides clear guidance regarding public school attendance:

A student's absence from school shall be considered excused if written documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

A. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation;

and

B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

1. student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
2. student's observance of a religious holiday;
3. death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
4. mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
5. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
6. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

If a student's absences do not meet the above criteria, his/her absences are considered unexcused. If a student has four unexcused absences in one month or ten unexcused absences in one school year, then he/she is considered truant.

Your school nurse is a great resource if you need assistance determining if your child should or should not attend school due to feeling unwell. The school will contact you regarding attendance concerns, and schedule calls or meetings to review your child's school attendance and/or truancy if necessary. If you are experiencing any difficulty getting your child to school, or getting your child to school on time, we are here to help! Please contact the Principal or one of our School Psychologists.

Academics

Multilingual Learners (MLLs)

Students who qualify as Multilingual Learners (MLLs) are provided services to support their ability to understand, speak, read and write in English. Upon registration with the Darien Public Schools, parents complete a "Home Language Survey." Eligibility for supplemental English Language Services will be determined based on information provided on the Home Language Survey and other school assessments. Additional information is available [here](#).

Gifted Students

Darien's gifted program is called the Idea (Interesting Dimensions that Extend Abilities) program. Gifted students in the Darien Public Schools are those students in grades two through eight who demonstrate or show potential for exceptional capability. Parents, teachers, or other school staff may refer students to be evaluated for the gifted program. Students are identified as gifted through a collaborative process and show evidence of giftedness through a variety of measures, including the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT):

- Areas: verbal and nonverbal reasoning ability
- Grades administered: all third and fifth graders, and any students referred for gifted services in grades 1-8.
- Time frame: all third and fifth graders and currently enrolled students referred for gifted services in grades 1-8 take the OLSAT in February (results in May). Students new to the district that are referred for gifted services in grades 1-8 take the OLSAT in September (results in November) or February.

Students identified as gifted in grades two through five participate in a gifted curriculum for seventy-five to ninety minutes per week.

The gifted curriculum focuses on critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and discussions about big ideas and essential questions.

For more information about the gifted program, please see our [website](#) or contact the Gifted Program Director, Dr. Jennifer Falcone (ifalcone@darienps.org)

Field Trips

During the school year, students may take field trips in conjunction with the curriculum. Notification of individual trips is provided in advance by the sponsoring teacher. If parent volunteers are required for chaperone support, a teacher or room parent will reach out to organize volunteers. If a parent participates as a volunteer chaperone on field trips, they are not permitted to bring any other children with them. Students may not be dropped off or picked up from field trip locations.

Formal permission must be given by parents in ASPEN for children to attend field trips within or out of Darien. Parents should have updated contact information in ASPEN, in case of an emergency. This is especially important during field trips to locations within or outside of Darien. This should be done at the start of the school year as part of the Contact and Emergency Permission sign-offs and updated throughout the year as changes occur.

Homework in the Elementary Schools

Education is a continuous process that takes place outside of school as well as in school. Homework completed by students should reinforce or extend skills and strategies taught in school to promote further practice. The following guidelines have been developed for homework in the elementary schools with the understanding they provide a general framework for assigning student work.

Homework and the nature of the assignments should support the curriculum, be appropriate to the children's ages and reflect teachers' judgment of their students' needs and abilities. Therefore, the amount of homework assigned is to gradually increase as students progress through the grades. Homework should not be assigned on weekends or holidays.

Elementary Mathematics Homework, Grades 1-5

Math homework completed by students should reinforce or extend skills and strategies taught in school. This work includes reinforcement of conceptual understanding, computational and procedural fluency, basic fact fluency and problem solving. Mathematics homework is given on a daily basis, with the exceptions noted above.

Elementary Literacy Homework, Grades K-5

Children benefit from time spent reading outside of school. Just like any skill, practice is necessary for improvement. In grades 2 through 5, students should be reading for 20-30 minutes per night. For kindergarten and grade 1 students, parents should read aloud with their children regularly, approximately 20-30 minutes. We recommend a variety of genres and mediums (i.e., newspapers, magazines, storybooks, informational books, poetry). In addition, all students will be bringing home

'just right' classroom books to read every night. (The only exception is Kindergarten when students begin bringing home 'just right' books mid-way through the school year.) Therefore it is important for parents to provide a quiet time for reading each night. Research strongly supports regular nightly independent reading as an important way to help youngsters read more effectively. Your child will learn important skills and strategies by reading every day.

Writing and other language arts skills work are assigned as needed.

Make-Up Work for Excused Absences Elementary Make-up Work

Make-up work is not provided to or expected from a student who has been marked absent/excused for less than three consecutive days.

Makeup Homework for Extended Absences Due to Family Vacations, etc.

Teachers are not required to provide special work for students who will be absent for reasons such as a family vacation. Teachers will provide missed work to students when they return to school, to be completed within a reasonable time period. If tutoring is necessary, the cost would be the responsibility of the parent.

Library Media Center

All students, faculty, and staff may borrow library materials. All children are held responsible for any material(s) taken from the library. Lost materials and books must be paid for before the end of the school year.

In addition to managing the books and learning materials in the library media center, our library media specialist (LMS) is also responsible for the distribution, maintenance, and initial tech support for our Tablets and Chromebooks. All students will be given a device at the beginning of the school year. Students in grades K-2 will use a Chromebook tablet, and students in grades 3-5 will use a Chromebook laptop. Students will learn about our acceptable use policy in media class and in their classroom. Parents are required to sign off on the acceptable use policy in ASPEN in order for their child(ren) to receive their device. Our Library Media Specialist, along with classroom teachers, will review internet safety and digital citizenship at the beginning of the year and on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHOOL DEVICES MAY ONLY BE USED FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES.

Report Cards and Conferences

Report cards are issued in December, March and June. Parent-Teacher conferences are held twice a year: in October and March. Parents are also always welcome to reach out to their child's teacher

during the year. Conferences and meetings must be scheduled in advance and drop-ins will not be accommodated. Parent-teacher conference dates will be listed on the [district school calendar](#) and on the school website. On all conference days, students will be dismissed early. Please plan accordingly.

Health Information

We ask that you work with us to carefully monitor your child for illness. If you have any questions about your child's health or an illness, please contact the school nurse. We continue to ask that if your child is not feeling well, you please keep them home to rest.

- Please review this [Health Information Update](#) sent from our Director of Nursing, Emily Merritt.
- We also encourage you to visit the new [Holmes School Nurse website](#) to find answers to any health-related questions you may have.
- Please click [here](#) for information about medical forms, health screenings, and contact information for the district health services team.
- Emergency contact information must be recorded in ASPEN each school year. Please keep this information up-to-date as we rely on this for emergency situations.
- In the event a child becomes ill or is injured during the school day, the school nurse will make every attempt to contact the parent before releasing the child to the listed emergency contact.

CHILDREN WILL NOT BE RELEASED WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT (EITHER BY TELEPHONE OR BY AUTHORIZATION THROUGH ASPEN) TO AN ADULT OTHER THAN THE PARENT/GUARDIAN.

Physical Education Exclusion

The state of CT requires a physician's note for any long-term physical education exclusions following a serious illness or injury. These forms are available [here](#) and in the nurse's office. Any and all questions regarding exclusion from Physical Education or recess should be directed to the school nurse.

School Accident Insurance

Accident insurance may be purchased for students. Information regarding this protection is available [here](#). The school insurance is offered as a convenience to parents and there is no obligation to purchase it. Claims should be presented within 30 days. Claim forms are available in the nurse's office.

Special Education

Programs

Special Education is defined as specially designed instruction to meet a student's individual needs and to enable the student to access the general education curriculum of the school district. Darien provides a continuum of special education services for students in grades preK through 12 and post secondary transitional programs.

Referral to Special Education

A referral to special education may be made by a parent, school personnel, an adult student, and other individuals from other agencies (for example, physicians, psychologists, social workers). A referral to special education form may be found [here](#).

[Referral to Determine Eligibility for Special Education and Related Services](#)

The District uses initial evaluation and reevaluation procedures in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to ensure that proper identification of students with disabilities occurs through comprehensive multidisciplinary assessments and evaluation practices. Upon completion of the initial evaluation, Darien will convene a PPT meeting to review the evaluation and determine whether the student is a child with a disability whose disability adversely affects the student's educational performance and requires special education and/or related services.

Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

Students who are found eligible for special education and /or related services are required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). *The IEP is a written plan that describes the student's present levels of performance, measurable educational goals and objectives, evaluation procedures and performance criteria, modifications and accommodations, recommended instructional programs and settings, and the frequency and duration of the services.*

Parents may access additional information about special education at the following link:
[A Parent's Guide to Special Education in Connecticut](#)

Section 504 Accommodations

Section 504 provides reasonable accommodations to eligible students who attend schools receiving Federal financial assistance. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

[Darien Public Schools Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Manual](#)

Standardized Testing

The following standardized tests are mandated by the State of Connecticut and the federal government (No Child Left Behind Act).

State Mandated Test	Subjects	Grades Administered	Time Frame
Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA)	Mathematics, English Language Arts	3-8	Spring
Connecticut School Day Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Mathematics, Evidence-Based Reading & Writing	11	Spring
Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)	Science	5, 8, 11	Spring
Connecticut Physical Fitness	Physical Fitness	4, 6, 8, 10	Throughout the year
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* <i>(Not administered every year.)</i>	Subjects may include: Arts, Civics, Economics, Geography, Math, Reading, Science, U.S. History, Writing	Grades administered may include: 4, 8, 10 and 12	Spring

Multilingual Learners may be required to complete LasLinks or the Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAELPP). Kindergarten students will participate in an Entrance Inventory.

Optional assessments include: AP, ACT, SAT, PSAT, Practice ACT

In addition, as noted in the section on gifted programs, the district administers the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT).

Technology Resources for Students ([Policy 5300](#))

The Darien Board of Education provides its students and staff access to a multitude of technology resources for educational purposes. These resources provide opportunities to enhance teaching and learning, and to build stronger connections within our town and to others in the global community.

With access to the District's technology resources comes a level of responsibility and expectation for students. Students will be required to exercise the highest forms of ethical and responsible use when working in digital environments. Students are also expected to treat technology resources with care so that their integrity is preserved for the benefit of all. The District has outlined a set of policies and procedures related to technology resources connected with these student expectations. Violations of these policies may lead to withdrawal of the access privilege and/or disciplinary measures in accordance with the Board's student discipline policy.

Each year, a User Agreement sign-off in ASPEN will be required for students to use the district's technology resources.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to digital systems designed to complete specific tasks. Smartphone's facial recognition, virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri, and social media algorithms all use AI. Generative AI (GenAI) is a newer technology that creates original content, including text, images, and music, by learning from existing data. If used appropriately, AI supports digital literacy, learning, and productivity in school and beyond.

AI's purpose in our learning environment is to augment, not replace, the effort put into learning. AI in the classroom can provide personalized support, rapid feedback, and engaging learning experiences tailored to individual needs and progress. Teachers may utilize data-privacy vetted and age-appropriate AI tools when an educational benefit exists. With teacher permission, AI may be used to facilitate tasks, but not to complete them, ensuring students develop necessary skills.

Tips for Upper Elementary Students:

1. Always start by asking your teacher if you can use GenAI on the work you are assigned.

2. Be sure to track your usage of the tool. One way you can do this is to copy and paste your conversation into a Word or Google document.

3. Always explain how you used the tool when you submit your assignment.

Examples of Possible

Appropriate AI Usage	Inappropriate AI Usage
Research Assistance: Gather knowledge and information for a topic, assignment, or assessment.	Submitting AI-Generated Work: Turning in assignments entirely created by AI without disclosure.
Brainstorming: Collect ideas to help start new work.	Plagiarism: Using AI to rephrase existing content without proper citation.
Practice and Revision: Utilizing AI for practice exercises, grammar checks, and feedback.	Misinformation: Relying on unchecked AI-generated information.
Personalize Learning: AI may help you learn at your own pace.	Not Asking Permission: Submitting work without confirming that GenAI is permitted to be used.

Personal Mobile Devices - District Guidance

Research underscores the substantial impact of personal mobile devices (namely cell phones and Smartwatches) on student attention within the classroom environment. Moreover, these devices have been shown to significantly influence the social, emotional, and mental health/wellness of our youth. In response, a District Personal Mobile Device Plan was developed. The following guidelines aim to promote a safe and distraction-free learning environment that supports the right to privacy for all students and staff.

- **School Day Guidelines:**

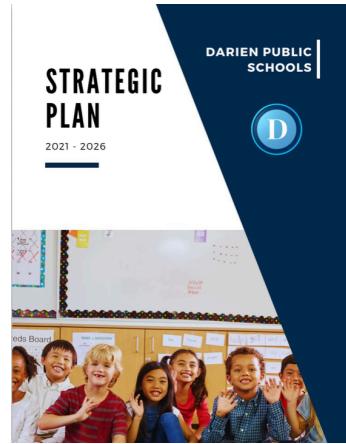
The use of personal mobile devices by elementary school students is prohibited. If families elect to allow their child to carry a personal mobile device for an identified purpose, the device must remain powered off, silenced and stored in the child's backpack throughout the school day, including while riding the bus. Any device that is not powered off, silenced and stored away will be confiscated; parents will be required to pick up a confiscated personal mobile device at the end of the school day. Darien Public Schools is not responsible for the loss or damage of any personal belongings brought to school.

- **Field Trips/School-Sponsored Activities Guidelines:**
Personal mobile devices are never required for field trips or school-sponsored activities. The use of personal mobile devices for field trips by elementary students is prohibited. Any device that is not powered off, silenced and stored away will be confiscated; parents will be required to pick up any confiscated personal mobile devices at the end of the field trip/school-sponsored activity or school day.
- **Exemptions:**
Some personal mobile devices are used to monitor a student's health, such as insulin levels or blood pressure. Students using a device for a clearly defined medical purpose must have this accounted for within a student medical accommodation plan, which will require notification from a health care provider. Use of that device must be exclusively for that described medical purpose.

Any other approved exemptions to these guidelines will be handled when requested on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the building principal, family, and related instructional staff.

District Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan



Additional Board Policies

1000 Series - Community/Board Operation

[1100 Pesticide Application on School Property](#)

[1150 Sexual Offenders](#)

[1175 Prohibition Against Smoking](#)

4000 Series - Personnel

[4025 Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children](#)

[4111 Equal Opportunity for Employment/Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination \(Personnel\)](#)

[4175 Prohibition on Recommendations for Psychotropic Drugs](#)

5000 Series - Students

[5075 Physical Activity and Student Discipline](#)

[5130 Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism](#)

[5175 Bullying Prevention and Intervention and Safe School Climate Plan](#)

[5200 Homeless Children and Youth](#)

[5220 Student Discipline](#)

[5225 Drug and Alcohol Use by Students](#)

[5265 Confidentiality and Access to Education Records](#)

6000 Series - Instruction

[6820 Homework](#)

[6850 Promotion and Retention](#)

Connecticut State Department of Education

Complaint Resolution Procedure

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 299(10)(a)

I. Filing of Complaint

- A. Violation of Law: A written complaint may be filed by an organization or individual with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education alleging that the state educational agency (SEA) or an agency or consortium of agencies is violating a federal statute or regulation that applies to the following applicable programs:
 1. Part A of Title I (Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies).
 2. Part B, Subpart 1 of Title I (Reading First).
 3. Part B, Subpart 3 of Title I (Even Start Family Literacy Programs).
 4. Part D of Title I (Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk of Dropping Out).
 5. Part A of Title II (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund).
 6. Part D of Title II (Enhancing Education Through Technology).
 7. Part A of Title III (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act).
 8. Part B, Subpart 4 of Title III (Emergency Immigrant Education Program).
 9. Part A of Title IV (Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities).
 10. Part A of Title V (Innovative Programs).
- B. Review of an Appeal: A written complaint may be filed by an individual with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education appealing the decision of an agency or consortium of agencies based on prior written complaint presented by an individual to such agency or consortium of agencies.
- C. Content of Complaint: The complaint shall be in writing, signed by the complainant and contain the following:
 1. A statement that the SEA or an agency or consortium of agencies has violated a requirement of federal statutes or regulation regarding the applicable program, or in the case of an appeal, a statement of aggrievement with the decision rendered by the agency or consortium of agencies based on a prior written complaint.
 2. A clear and concise description of the facts on which the statement is based and the specific alleged violation or aggrievement.
 3. A description of prior efforts to resolve the complaint, including information demonstrating that the SEA, agency or consortium of agencies has taken

action adverse to the complaint or has refused or failed to take action within a reasonable period of time.

4. Complainant's and respondent's name, address and telephone number.
5. Other materials or documents containing information which support or clarify the statement.

II. Review of Complaint

- A. Analysis: Within three business days of the receipt of the complaint, the Commissioner shall assign a review official. Within five business days of the assignment, the review official shall determine whether the complaint has been properly filed in accordance with Section I. If necessary, the review official shall interview the complainant.
- B. Dismissal of Complaint: The review official may dismiss the complaint in writing stating an explanation for such action. The grounds for dismissal shall include, but not limited to, the following:
 1. Failure to file a proper complaint pursuant to Section I.
 2. The allegations fail to state a bona fide violation of federal statute or regulations by the SEA or an agency or consortium of agencies.
 3. The allegations fail to state a bona fide aggrievement with the decision rendered by an agency or consortium of agencies based on prior written complaint.
 4. The allegations were not caused by the actions or failure to act by the SEA, agency or consortium of agencies.

III. Notification of Complaint and Investigation: If a complaint is not dismissed, the review official shall forward the complaint to the respondent immediately along with a copy of the Complaint Resolution Procedures.

IV. Response to Complaint: Within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint from the review official, the respondent shall file with the Commissioner a written response to the complaint.

- A. Content of Response: The response shall address each and every allegation of the complaint and shall list the respondent's name, address and telephone number.
- B. Interview: The review official or the respondent may request an interview to discuss the response and to resolve the dispute informally.

V. Complaint Investigation: Upon completion of Section IV or the failure of the respondent to file a response, the review official shall conduct an investigation. All parties may be duly notified that an investigation has begun. At any time during the investigation, the review official shall attempt to resolve the dispute informally.

Within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint, an investigation of the complaint shall be completed and a written report shall be mailed to both parties. Information shall be gathered in a timely manner, while minimizing any inconvenience or disruption to the complainant or respondent.

Concerning a review of an appeal of the decision of an agency or consortium of agencies, the review official may elect to disregard the procedures contained in this section using in lieu thereof the following abbreviated procedure.

1. Review all of the appropriate records and determine whether the decision of the agency or consortium of agencies shall be affirmed, reversed or modified.
2. Draft a letter of review of an appeal addressing, but not limited to, the issue in dispute, the facts found, the affirmation, reversal or modification of the lower decision and recommendation for improved practices, policies or procedures.
- B. Data Collection: The complainant and respondent shall provide the review official with copies of all relevant records requested in writing. Telephone interviews of the complainant, respondent and others with knowledge of the allegations may be conducted. 44 Pursuant to 34 CFR 99-35(a) the review official, acting on behalf of the SEA, is authorized to have access to education records in connection with an evaluation of federal or state-supported education programs or for the enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements which relate to those programs.
- C. Independent On-Site Investigation: The review official may conduct an on-site visit to investigate the complaint if the official deems it necessary. Any on-site visit shall be coordinated with the respondent.
- D. Complaint Investigation Report: The Complaint Investigation Report shall be completed by the review official and mailed to the parties within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint by the SEA. The Commissioner may grant an extension for the completion of the report on written request of the review official or respondent if exceptional circumstances exist with respect to the particular complaint. Such extension shall be in writing and shall be mailed to the parties. The report shall contain the following contents:
 1. Summary of all investigation activities including, but not limited to, date of receipt of complaint, allegations, parties interviewed, documents received and dates of on-site visits.
 2. Specific allegation of the complaint, the findings of fact, conclusions and final decisions rendered regarding each allegation, including citation to applicable federal statute or regulation.
 3. Specific corrective action plan that resolves the complaint or ensures future compliance of the respondent regarding the violation of federal statute or regulation.
 4. Recommendations for improved practices, policies or procedures shall be offered when no violation of federal statute or regulation is found.
- E. Corrective Action Plan: If the Complaint Investigation Report finds that the respondent is violating federal statute or regulations, the respondent shall be requested to submit a corrective action plan within a specified period of time as determined by the review official. Respondent may request technical assistance from the SEA in order to prepare a plan to achieve compliance. 45 VI. Review of Final Decision. The complainant may file a written request with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of

Education to review the final decision of the SEA. All local educational agencies shall disseminate information about the complaint procedures to teachers, staff, parents and appropriate private school officials or representatives.