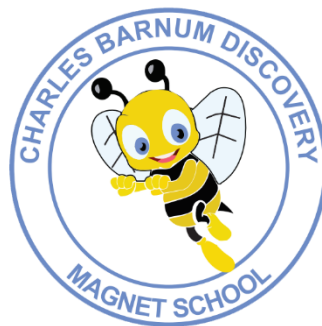


# GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2025 - 2026

## Elementary School Handbook



Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School  
Charles Barnum Discovery Magnet School  
Mystic River Active Exploration Magnet School  
Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School  
Thames River Environmental & Marine Science Magnet School

The Groton Board of Education meets on the second, third, and fourth Monday of each month. Please check our website at [www.grotonschools.org](http://www.grotonschools.org) for location of meeting.

## **GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Contact Board of Education members through the Central Office  
1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355

860-572-2100

[board-of-ed@groton.k12.ct.us](mailto:board-of-ed@groton.k12.ct.us)

Beverly Washington, Chairperson  
Adrian Johnson, Vice Chairperson/Secretary  
Andrea Ackerman, Ed.D.  
Sean Corcoran  
Mitchell Shinbrot  
Ian Thomas  
Jay Weitlauf  
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Michael Whitney, Ph.D.

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Susan Austin, Superintendent of Schools  
Anne Marie Mancini, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent  
Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Services  
Samuel Kilpatrick, Director of Facilities  
Clint Kennedy, Ph.D., Director of Technology Services  
Laurie LePine, Director of Human Resources  
Rita Parciak, Director of Finance

## **GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Groton Public Schools is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. It is the policy of the Groton Board of Education that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against under any program, including employment, on the basis of sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, handicap, ancestry, physical or mental disability, or lack of proficiency in the English language.

Inquiries regarding Groton Public Schools' nondiscrimination policies should be directed to Anne Marie Mancini, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, at Groton Public Schools' Administrative Offices, 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or (860) 572-2175. Any person having inquiries concerning Groton Public Schools' compliance with Title IX or Section 504 should contact Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, at Groton Public Schools' Administrative Offices, 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or (860) 572-2150.

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2025-2026 School Calendar



# GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

P.O. Box K, Groton, Connecticut 06340 • 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

PHONE: (860) 572-2100 • FAX: (860) 572-2107

[www.grotonschools.org](http://www.grotonschools.org)

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to Groton Public Schools! We are so excited to have you as part of our family. This handbook is a guide to help you have a successful and fun school year. Our district believes in providing a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment where every student can grow and succeed. Our mission is to inspire, educate, and empower all students through a commitment to teaching and learning. We are dedicated to helping you reach your full potential, both inside and outside the classroom, by providing you with the tools and support you need to become a lifelong learner.

At Groton Public Schools (GPS), we believe in developing a strong home and school partnership to help our students maximize their talents to be successful. With this in mind, we would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the Elementary Student Handbook. The Elementary Student Handbook serves as a comprehensive guide, providing valuable information about district policies, procedures and resources. It outlines our shared expectations for students, parents and the school community as a whole.

I encourage you to thoroughly review the GPS Elementary Student Handbook with your child to ensure a shared understanding of our expectations and district policies and procedures. It will serve as an invaluable resource throughout the school year. Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's school. Our administrative team is here to support you.

Together, we can create an inspiring learning environment where every child feels safe and valued and academically successful. Thank you for partnering with us in your child's education. I look forward to a rewarding and successful school year.

Sincerely,

*Susan L. Austin*

Susan L. Austin  
Superintendent of Schools

# **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS – BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS**

## **Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School**

500 Poquonnock Road

Groton, CT 06340

860-449-5608

Christine Dauphinais, Principal

Daniel Vanasse, Assistant Principal

## **Charles Barnum Discovery Magnet School**

68 Briar Hill Road

Groton, CT 06340

860-449-5640

Stephanie Sawyer, Principal

Christina Post, Assistant Principal

## **Mystic River Active Exploration Magnet School**

160 Fishtown Road

Mystic, CT 06340

860-980-8300

Steven Wheeler, Principal

Paul DiPadua, Assistant Principal

Shira Sabo, Assistant Principal

## **Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School**

115 Oslo Street

Mystic, CT 06355

860-572-5852

Ryan Chaney, Principal

Stephanie Wheeler, Assistant Principal

## **Thames River Environmental & Marine Science Magnet School**

250 Brandegee Avenue

Groton, CT 06340

860-980-8230

Jamie Giordano, Principal

Ada Allen, Assistant Principal

Amber Monahan, Assistant Principal

## **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework that provides all students with high-quality instruction and interventions to meet their academic and behavioral needs. When applied to behavior, MTSS creates a proactive and preventative approach, moving away from reactive discipline. The first tier, or universal level, focuses on establishing school-wide expectations and teaching positive behaviors to all students. The second tier targets small groups of students who need additional support, offering interventions like social skills groups or check-in/check-out programs. Finally, the third tier provides intensive, individualized support for students with significant and persistent behavioral challenges, often involving a team-based problem-solving approach and a customized behavior intervention plan. Through this tiered system, schools can address a wide range of behavioral needs, fostering a positive and safe school environment for everyone.

Through the MTSS initiative, a leadership team in each school develops a framework to support student behavior at the individual, classroom, and school-wide level. This framework is then established with the entire school community to create procedures for teaching positive expectations, routines, and behaviors and strategies to discourage inappropriate behavior. Students with behavioral concerns receive increased positive support through behavioral interventions, which focus on the teaching and reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and social skills development. There are greater opportunities for student success when students have clearly defined expectations that are taught and reinforced. The set of clearly stated positive expectations and behaviors are posted throughout the school and in each classroom for quick, easy reference. These postings usually display the school's unique logo or mascot to increase school spirit. Individual, classroom, and school-wide incentives as well as positive contacts and communications with families are provided to encourage and recognize appropriate behavior. PBIS improves the overall climate of the school community and involves parents as partners, while improving student academic success.

## **Parent Involvement**

A child's educational success is a partnership shared by school and family, including all those who play an important role in the child's well-being. Student achievement increases when families are active in the learning process. Educators recognize and acknowledge the family's role as the primary facilitator of their children's education.

Families are welcome in all Groton schools. Their support and assistance are actively sought in their child's social, emotional, and academic development. Please refer to the Volunteer Policy.

Parent involvement programs in our schools support and respect family responsibilities and diversity, as well as link parents to programs and resources within the community. All families will be provided opportunities for involvement.

Family and school communications are two-way, regular, meaningful, and respectful. Effective communication requires that both the family and the school initiate contact and provide vital information about a child's strengths, challenges, and accomplishments.

## **School Visitations**

Students are not allowed to have visitors in school during normal school hours except when granted special permission from a school administrator who has been given one full day's notice. Once permission has been granted, all visitors must enter the school using the doors at the main lobby. All school doors are locked; visitors requesting entrance must ring the buzzer on the school's PA/Camera and speak with the building secretary. Once the request for access has been validated, the secretary will unlock the doors. All visitors must then report to the school's main office, present identification as needed, and obtain a Visitor's badge which must be displayed on their upper torso while they are on school property. Upon departure, all badges must be returned to the main office.

## **PTO/PTA**

The Groton Board of Education believes that parent-school collaboration is essential to providing the best learning environment for our children. Participation in parent/teacher organizations is one of the best ways to support your child's education. All schools have active PTO/PTA organizations.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS**

The core mission of Groton Public Schools is teaching and learning! To this end, the district offers extensive academic programming designed to provide students with the academic, workplace, and citizenship skills that will prepare them for success in college and/or a career. Our core academic program focuses on building a rigorous foundation for students within a supportive learning environment.

Groton's curricula have been developed around both state and national standards. In 2010, Connecticut adopted the Common Core State Standards, a progression of learning expectations in mathematics and English/Language Arts. These standards are designed to prepare students for success in college and a career. Groton Public Schools has aligned its curricula to incorporate the Common Core in both English and Mathematics in an effort to improve teaching and learning so that all children will graduate with the skills they need to be successful. The literacy skills articulated in the Common Core have also been incorporated into other academic programs such as the district's Science, Social Studies, World Languages, and Physical Education and Health curricula.

The Common Core State Standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country as well as from countries around the world. They provide teachers with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. In each content area students are encouraged to explore, develop key academic skills, and make connections between the disciplines and the world around them. Teachers seek to actively engage students by encouraging them to analyze information, make judgments, and synthesize their knowledge to create innovative solutions to real-world problems.

We encourage parents and families to use this guide in conjunction with resources and information you receive from your child's school and teachers in an effort to enhance your understanding of Groton Public Schools' academic program.

### **English Language Arts**

In our language arts program, we are dedicated to helping every student become a confident and skilled reader and writer. Our approach is rooted in the "Science of Reading," which means we use proven research to teach the foundational skills of literacy. Students learn all about the sounds letters make and how they combine to form words (phonics). They will practice reading smoothly and with expression (fluency), and build their vocabulary so they can understand what they read. Students will also have many opportunities to explore different types of books and stories, and to express their own ideas through writing. By building these skills together, students will unlock the world of reading, making every book an adventure.

### **Social Studies**

In our school, social studies is not just a separate subject; it's an exciting part of our literacy program! We believe that reading and writing are the keys to understanding the world, and social studies provides us with the perfect content to do just that. Students read captivating non-fiction books about history, geography, civics, and different cultures. These texts will not only help students learn about the world but also build their vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Through projects, discussions, and writing assignments, students will be able to show what they have learned and share their unique perspective on the world around you. By integrating social studies into our literacy curriculum, we are helping them become a knowledgeable reader and an engaged citizen.

## **Mathematics**

In our math program, we believe that everyone can be a great mathematician! We follow the Common Core State Standards, which are a set of clear and consistent goals that help us make sure students are learning the most important math skills at every grade level. This means they not only learn how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, but also learn to think like a mathematician by solving problems, explaining their thinking, and using math in real-life situations. Students use hands-on activities, games, and technology to make learning math fun and engaging. Our goal is to help them build a strong foundation in math so they can feel confident and prepared for all the math they will encounter in the future.

## **Science**

The elementary science curriculum is designed to give all students access to rich and challenging learning experiences that foster a strong foundation in scientific literacy, as well as to inspire students that may want to someday pursue advanced studies or careers in science. Science curriculum is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which Connecticut adopted in 2015. Each grade level includes study in the areas of physical, life, earth/space science, and engineering. In addition to learning content knowledge, students learn how to apply science and engineering practices such as: conducting investigations, creating models, and designing solutions to problems. Instructional strategies include student discourse, investigating scientific phenomena, and a rich assortment of hands-on activities that actively engage students in the learning process. Each year grade 5 students take the standardized NGSS assessment. Students in grades 4 and 5 use NGSS sample questions and interim assessments to prepare them for the test format.

## **Health**

Seven areas regarding health and safety are covered in grades K-5. These areas are Safety and First Aid, Mental Health, Nutrition, Addictive Substances, Growth and Development and Diseases and Disorders. We also offer AIDS Education and Sexual Harassment Education as required by Connecticut Education Law. Parents may exclude their child from specific curriculum units by written request.

The primary emphasis of the elementary health curriculum is to encourage students to make wise decisions based upon the information presented, and to accept the responsibility for protecting their own health.

## **Physical Education**

The Physical Education program strives to develop the skills of movement (basic skills), the knowledge of how and why one moves, and the relationships involved in movement. The ways in which students may express their own movements are through gymnastics, sports, games, dance, and rhythms. Fitness and sportsmanship are also part of the program.

## **Art**

The elementary art program is created by teachers whose expertise arises from a versatile and dynamic background of specialties. These areas include drawing, painting, ceramics, puppetry, costume and scene design, sculpture, mask-making, and papercraft.

These media are presented to inform students about the basic elements of art – line, shape, form, space, color, light, and texture. Children are encouraged to draw upon their own imaginations as well as to appreciate the great masters of art history.

In utilizing a varied selection of art materials, children learn to use such principles as balance, rhythm, variety, contrast, emphasis, harmony, and movement.

## **Music**

The elementary general music curriculum provides many opportunities for each child to become involved in music. Multi-sensory experiences are provided which include singing, listening, playing instruments, moving to music, reading, writing, and creating music. Fourth and fifth grade chorus provides enriched experiences in part singing for upper elementary children. In addition, students have the opportunity to engage in one or more performances including concerts, musicals, or ensembles.

Formal instrumental music lessons begin at the fourth grade and are continued through fifth grade with a comprehensive method textbook. Third grade instrumental students are introduced to the recorder, a medieval wind instrument. All students who take instrumental lessons are provided with an opportunity to perform in a school band.

Orchestra is another way for students to become involved in music. Students may choose to play the violin, viola, cello, or string bass. String instruction begins at the elementary level and continues through high school. Lessons are scheduled within the school day and follow a comprehensive method. All children who study a string instrument are provided with the opportunity to perform a variety of styles of music in a wide variety of settings.

The music department has incorporated computerized composition and performance software into the teaching and learning of music.

## **Library Media Programs**

Groton's school library media centers are an integral part of every school's program and are staffed by certified media specialists, with library technical assistants as support staff. From collections of books, magazines, audiovisual, video and computer materials, students can obtain information which supplements the curriculum, which broadens personal interests, and which assists them in their research.

The media centers have truly become information technology centers. Each center is fully automated, with an electronic circulation and on-line catalog system. They receive instruction in how to search electronic on-line databases and reference tools.

Students utilize the library media centers for skills instruction, individual or small group research, book selection, storytelling and leisure reading. It is the department's mission to provide experiences that develop skills which enable students to access, evaluate, locate and communicate information, unimpeded by social, cultural, economic, and geographic constraints.

## **Internet Use**

Students in grades 2 through 5 are part of our 1-to-1 device program, where each student is provided with a Chromebook to use for learning. This device is a powerful tool that helps them explore, create, and collaborate. Students will use the Chromebook for research, writing, math practice, and to access a variety of educational applications. It is important to treat the Chromebook with care, just like any other school material. We will teach students how to be a responsible digital citizen, so they can use this technology safely and effectively to enhance their learning both in the classroom and at home.

Prior to receiving authorization to use the Internet, students and their parents/guardians must sign a "Permission and Contract" document provided by the school district. Use of the Internet is a privilege, and all students must abide by the Groton Board of Education "Internet Use Policy and Procedures" to assure it is used appropriately and responsibly.

## **Homework**

Research evidence indicates a positive correlation between homework, student performance, and achievement. Regular homework will be assigned to students. Homework assignments should:

- be related to classroom instruction;
- be age and developmentally appropriate;
- provide reinforcement and enrichment of classroom instruction which can be independently completed by the student;
- emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, and written expression;
- emphasize quality over quantity;
- be reviewed/assessed once submitted;
- contribute to the evaluation of the student's performance.

Homework should be relevant and instructionally sound and should not be used for disciplinary purposes. It should be noted that, on occasion, individual students may have to complete unfinished classroom work in addition to the regularly scheduled homework assignments.

The following homework procedures have been developed for grades PreK-5:

Gr. PreK, K - Daily reading with parent or guardian.

Gr. 1 - 15 minutes of daily reading, plus 10 minutes of other homework activities, not more than 3 times per week.

Gr. 2 - 5 minutes of daily reading, plus 15 minutes of other homework activities, not more than 3 times per week.

Gr. 3 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 20 minutes of other homework activities, 2 to 4 times per week.

Gr. 4 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 30 minutes of other homework activities, 3 to 5 times per week.

Gr. 5 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 45 minutes of other homework activities, 3 to 5 times per week.

Students may work on extended/long-term assignments during weekends and other designated periods of time including school breaks during the school year.

## **Reporting System**

The evaluation of student progress is based upon end of the year grade level expectations listed in our curricula. Separate report cards will be used for each grade level.

Your child's progress is reported three times during the year – December, March, and June. Conferences are held twice a year. In each marking period, parents will receive a cumulative copy of the report card.

## **Promotion**

Students shall be placed by the certified staff at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially, and emotionally. Students will normally progress annually from grade to grade. Exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the certified staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the students involved. The Board of Education recognizes that retention in grade, most often, is not – in the long term – in the best interest of the student. Retention, therefore, shall not be determined on a standards-based policy. Retention in grade may be made on an individual basis for compelling reasons based on data indicating that such a decision may benefit a specific child.

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES**

## **Special Education Instruction**

The Planning and Placement Teams (PPT) in each of our schools ensure that students meet the eligibility requirements of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state regulations. It is also through the PPT process that the district ensures that all students with disabilities aged 3 through 22 who require special education and related services, who have not graduated with a regular high school diploma, receive FAPE or a Free and Appropriate Public Education. The district develops a written plan for each student requiring special education and related services. This plan is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP is developed, implemented, maintained, reviewed, revised, and evaluated for all students served by our district on an annual basis.

The district ensures that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are nondisabled. However, the district provides a continuum of programming options for students to the extent necessary in order to implement the IEP. Each student requiring special education and related services is educated in the school that he or she would attend if he or she did not require special education and related services, unless the IEP requires another placement.

The Integrated Preschool Special Needs Programs are designed to provide quality preschool programming as well as special education services to 3, 4, and 5 year old children in Groton. Special education and related services are provided to preschool children identified by the PPT as having a disability in accordance with their IEP. The programs also enroll typically developing peers to serve as role models for preschool children with disabilities. All preschool age children who are suspected of having a disability are screened and, if necessary, evaluated by the Early Childhood Assessment Team (ECAT) to determine eligibility for special education and related services.

## **Related Services**

The following services are available in each school:

**Social Work and Psychological Services** are provided by certified school psychologists and certified school social workers who provide a range of services including support for all students and consultation and collaboration with educators, professionals and parents. School Social workers and school psychologists work collaboratively with teachers and administrators to help create safe and supportive school environments, empower teachers to understand and respond to students' social and emotional needs, develop and monitor academic and behavioral interventions to enable students to attain educational goals and personal and social well-being, and coordinate community services, outside providers and agency involvement to prevent problems, enhance independence and promote optimal learning.

**School Psychologists also** conduct individual assessments to provide information that is helpful in determining a student's eligibility for special education and related services and in the development of individual academic and behavioral programs which maximize the student's achievement and education success.

**Speech and Language Services** are provided by certified speech and language pathologists to students who exhibit speech-language impairments that adversely affect educational performance in accordance with the IEP. Speech and language pathologists participate in the development and monitoring of alternative procedures and programs in general education which may be explored and implemented, where appropriate, before a child is referred to special education. When concerns about a child's communication development continue despite the implementation of alternative interventions, speech and language pathologist conduct individual assessments to provide information that is helpful in determining a child's eligibility for speech and language services as special education or a related service.

**Occupational Therapy** addresses a students' ability to access the school environment safely and as independently as possible, including the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, playground, and bus. Occupational therapists support students' academic skills such as handwriting skills, keyboarding adaptations, functional performance such as self-regulation skills to improve attention and social skills, dressing, eating, and self-care skills. Occupational therapy is a related service which means that it provides support to a child with an identified disability so that the child can benefit from special education. This can take the form of direct interventions, consultation/collaboration with the educational team, accommodations, and modifications.

**Physical Therapy** also addresses the students' ability to access the school environment safely and as independently as possible, including stairs, uneven surfaces, and physical education class. Physical therapists support students' functional skills in the areas of mobility, balance, and coordination required to safely access the school environment and participate in their education. Physical therapy is a related service which means that it provides support to a child with an identified disability so that the child can benefit from special education. This can take the form of direct interventions, consultation/collaboration with the educational team, accommodations, and modifications.

**Special Education Transportation** refers to modified transportation services provided to students with disabilities to get to and from school, as well as between school and other locations during the school day safely. This includes specialized vehicles such as small buses or buses with wheelchair lifts, trained staff such as bus aides, consistent routines, and safety harnesses, if appropriate. Special transportation is a related service which means that it provides support to a child with an identified disability so that the child can benefit from special education.

**Homebound Instruction** is provided for students when they are unable to attend school due to a verified medical reason which may include mental health issues and is indicated as such in writing by the child's treating physician. School health personnel are required to consult with the child's treating physician to determine if attendance at school with reasonable accommodations is feasible. The child's absence from school is required to be at least 10 consecutive school days or due to the child's condition, the child is expected to be absent from school for short, repeated periods of time during the school year.

**Early Intervention Prior to Referral to Special Education** - Before school personnel refer a student to a Planning and Placement Team (PPT), alternative strategies and programs in general education are explored and where appropriate, implemented. Despite additional support, a small number of children still may not make adequate progress in developing targeted skills. They may cause a family or a teacher to suspect that a child may have a disability, prompting a request for an evaluation to determine whether a child may require special education.

The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or MTSS process, involves providing students with high-quality instruction and interventions that are matched to student needs, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying data to inform education decisions. MTSS is a multi-tiered, layered instructional approach that aims to prevent learning impediments and behavioral problems first, and then brings increasingly intense interventions to students who continue to experience difficulty. The primary goal of MTSS is improving academic and behavioral outcomes for all students by eliminating discrepancies between actual and expected performances. Instructional decisions are made by school-based teams and focused on determining the extent to which the student is responding to the interventions based on a review of data that is collected over time.

# SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM SERVICES

Groton Public Schools provide the school nursing service for the Groton Schools. An on-site professional registered nurse is responsible for carrying out the many activities of the school health program. The professional registered nurse is assisted by school health aides in specific areas. The goal of the school health program is to assist each child to attain and maintain his/her optimum state of health so that he/she may benefit to the maximum degree from his/her education experiences. The means of accomplishing this goal are to reduce the obstacles to learning caused by poor health and to contribute to education in healthful living.

## Health Requirements for Registration

The Groton Board of Education, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statute (Section 10-204A), requires that the required immunizations be documented by submission of a record at the time of registration. Immunization record or proof of immunity to certain diseases must be confirmed in writing by a physician or by lab confirmation. Parents or guardians may check the specifics of the required immunizations by contacting their child's pediatrician, the school nurse, the school nurse supervisor at 860-572-5867 or reviewing online State of CT Department of Public Health Immunization Requirements for students in CT schools.

According to Connecticut State Statute (Public Act 80-449; An Act Concerning School Health), all students are required to have a health assessment and mandated immunizations prior to public school enrollment.

Military students who do not have proof of an updated physical examination and/or immunization records upon registering for school will have 30 school days from the first day the student attends school to submit all necessary documentation to the school nurse. Military students will be subject to exclusion from school if the health requirements are not met within the 30 school day grace period.

Any student with a medical exemption must have the State of Connecticut Medical exemption form completed prior to entry.

Each medical record will be reviewed by school nursing staff and verification will be made as to compliance with State Statute. This information will be transferred to a permanent health record and should be kept current by notifying the school nurse when your child receives updated immunizations and physical examinations.

The required immunizations with doses and intervals set by CDC are as follows:

1. DTP/DTaP/TD
2. Polio
3. Hemophilus Influenza Type B (HIB)
4. Hepatitis B (HBV)
5. Measles, Rubella & Mumps (MMR)
6. Varicella
7. Pneumococcal
8. Influenza
9. Hepatitis A

## Health Services Offered

The school nurse is available for counseling in these situations:

1. **Illness** – Counsels students, contacts parents as necessary.
2. **First Aid** – Administers first aid and emergency care as needed.
3. **Physical Examinations** – Provided by SBHC with parental permission. State mandated prior to entry, grades 6, grade 10 and yearly for sports activities at the Middle and High Schools.

4. **Scoliosis Screening** – For students in grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
5. **Vision Tests** – For specific grade levels and for anyone who is referred.
6. **Hearing Tests** – For specific grade levels and for anyone who is referred.
7. **Teacher Nurse Conferences.**
8. **Health Education** – Does health education sessions on varying subjects in the classroom as a resource person.
9. **Health Counseling Services** – To students, parents, and faculty in relation to health needs.
10. **Home Visits** – Made on behalf of students for varying reasons.
11. **Multi-Disciplinary Team Member** – Works as needed with all professional school personnel to find the appropriate educational program for individual students.

You are encouraged to contact your school nurse with any questions or problems which you may encounter regarding the health of your child.

### **Physical Examinations**

Each pupil enrolled in the public schools is required to have a health examination at periodic intervals. It is required that the first examination be done within the year preceding the child's entrance to school. A health assessment form shall be given to you on the registration day. Physical assessments are required in grade 6 and grade 10. These must be completed during the school year or the student will be excluded from school at the beginning of the next year. Please refer to the Board policy on Physical Examinations on page 29 of this handbook.

Mandated components of the physical examination are as follows:

1. Hematocrit or hemoglobin test, height, weight and blood pressure; speech upon school entry;
2. Gross dental exam, vision, hearing, scoliosis screening and chronic disease assessment;
3. Immunizations as listed above.

### **TB Testing (PPD)**

Skin testing to be done if a student falls into certain high-risk groups or at the discretion of the physician.

## **GENERAL SCHOOL HEALTH INFORMATION**

**Health Records:** An individual cumulative health record is maintained for each child. The information recorded shall consist of a health history filled out by the parent or guardian at the time of registration. Results of ongoing screening tests are also incorporated into the record as they are performed at school. It is imperative that the parent/guardian notify the school nurse if a child has received an update on immunization or has received a physical examination from the family physician. This cooperative effort is extremely beneficial in ensuring effective health care and will prevent duplication of effort.

Health problems may restrict some students from participation in some school activities, such as physical education. In these circumstances, a note from a family physician describing the condition and advising the type and length of restriction is required. Permanent excuses must be renewed at the opening of each school year.

**Communicable Disease:** If a child is absent due to a diagnosed communicable disease such as chicken pox, please notify the school. When your child has recovered, he/she may be readmitted by the school nurse. In certain cases, such as infectious hepatitis, it may be necessary to have a readmission slip from a physician.

**Emergencies:** Health care provided in schools is restricted to first aid in accidents and illness. It is a prime importance that the school be provided with an emergency telephone number in case of a medical emergency or

routine illness which requires exclusion. The parent/guardian shall provide the school with an alternate telephone number of a relative, or neighbor, who has agreed to respond when the parent or guardian cannot be reached. This person should live within a reasonable distance from the school and be willing to accept the responsibility of providing transportation so that the child can be picked up at the school. This person will be responsible for your child's care and decisions made in your absence. The school will immediately summon an ambulance in cases of serious emergency.

**Medication in the Schools:** Students are not allowed to have any type of medications in the school. A physician's written order and parent's or guardian's authorization is required for a nurse or, in her absence, the principal or designee to administer medications. A form is available at each school to be filled out by the prescribing physician and signed by the parent or guardian. This form is returned to the school and kept with the child's health record.

Self-administration of medication will be allowed provided certain criteria are met. In the case of inhalant medications, self-administration may be approved with a prescription from a physician and written parental consent on file.

The medication must be given to the school nurse by the parent or guardian. The medication can then be administered, as prescribed by the school nurse, or in her absence, the principal or designee. These forms must be reviewed at specified intervals.

No more than a 3-month supply of medication can be kept at the school at one time. Parents should pick up any unused medications at the end of the school year or they will be destroyed.

**Exclusion:** A child can be excluded from school for various illnesses or injuries. The school nurse recommends exclusion to the principal or designee according to the policies set by the school medical advisors and the State Department of Health.

## **SCHOOL ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE**

### **Kindergarten Age Requirements**

Connecticut now requires children enrolling in Kindergarten to turn 5 years old on or before September 1 to be automatically eligible for kindergarten. Kindergarten Registration information is available on the Groton Public Schools website at [www.grotonschools.org](http://www.grotonschools.org). Incoming Kindergarten students may go through a readiness screening.

Groton Public Schools also offers Early Childhood opportunities including Preschool, Pre-K, and Transitional Kindergarten for children who have not turned 5 by September 1 of the current school year.

### **New Student Registration and Elementary School Placement**

Families of school-aged children entering Groton Public Schools for the first time must complete the online New Student Registration Form available on the Groton Public Schools website at [www.grotonschools.org](http://www.grotonschools.org) and upload all required documents per Board Policy P5112.2.

Required Registration Documents:

1. Proof of Child's Age
2. Proof of Residency
3. Parent/Guardian Photo ID
4. Physical Exam and Immunization Records (Required by the first day of school)

Per Board Policy 5117 all students shall attend the school within their designated attendance zone unless they have successfully earned a magnet seat at another school within Groton Public Schools through the lottery process. In the event that a building has reached enrollment capacity, newly enrolled students may be assigned to a school outside their attendance zone.

### **Supplies, Textbooks, Material and Equipment**

The school district will purchase such books, supplies, materials, and equipment necessary to meet the needs of instruction in the schools. All books and equipment shall be loaned and materials and supplies furnished to all pupils free of charge.

### **School Day Schedule**

Children receive a minimum of 5 hours and 30 minutes of instruction each day with the exception of early dismissal days. Two-hour early dismissal days are scheduled intermittently throughout the year to allow for parent-teacher conference and teacher in-service meetings.

#### **Elementary School Hours**

Grades 1-5: 9:00 am – 3:35 pm  
Full-Day Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 3:35 pm  
AM Pre-Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 11:48 am  
PM Pre-Kindergarten: 12:48 pm – 3:35 pm

#### **Early Dismissals – Weather Related**

Grade K-5: 9:00 am – 1:20 pm  
AM Pre-Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 11:08 am  
PM Pre-Kindergarten: No Classes

#### **Planned Early Dismissals (P/T Conf./TLI Days)**

Grade K-5: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm  
AM/PM Pre-Kindergarten: See teacher for schedule

### **Absences**

Good daily attendance at school is important to the academic and social growth of children. Occasions do arise, however, when absence from school is warranted and excused. These occasions can be categorized as: illness of the student, death in the immediate family, quarantine, and “exceptional urgent reasons” that may affect the child. The principal will determine what is covered by “exceptional urgent reasons.” In addition, absences will be excused when, as a result of severe weather conditions, a parent or guardian indicates in writing that school attendance would have presented a danger to the health or welfare of the child. All other absences are considered unexcused. If your child is going to be absent, you are asked to call the school that morning.

A child who is absent from school must present, upon return to school or within 10 school days, a note signed by the parent explaining the absence. A note of explanation from a parent is required also when a child arrives late for the beginning of school. Early dismissal also requires a note of explanation no later than the morning of the dismissal.

Students who are tardy should be signed in at the office by the parent/guardian.

It is suggested that parents be aware of the school calendar when planning family vacation trips. Missed work is not provided for students to take with them when they leave for unexcused absence, such as week-long vacations. The Board of Education policy on attendance is provided on page 20 of this handbook.

# **BUS TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY**

Transportation is provided for elementary school children who reside one (1) mile or more from school (1/2 mile or more for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children). Children residing less than one (1) mile from school will be bused only when a hazardous condition, as defined by the Pupil Transportation Policy of Groton Public Schools, exists along the walking route.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children are to be met by a parent or a designated person at midday and at the end of the day bus runs or the child will be returned to the school. Please notify your school's principal in writing if you cannot or choose not to follow this procedure. If we do not hear from you in writing, we will follow our procedure as outlined including the return of the child to the school, if warranted.

## **Crossing Guards**

A crossing guard may be stationed at hazardous intersections within a reasonable distance of the school. Normally the crossing guard will be on duty when your child is traveling to or from school. The crossing guard is employed and trained by the Police Department. Parents are asked to stress the importance of cooperating with the school safety crossing guard.

## **Bus Code of Conduct**

Bus transportation to school is a privilege available to all students. However, this privilege can be suspended. The bus is an extension of the school and it is expected that proper behavior will prevail. The driver is in FULL charge on the bus, and his/her instructions are to be obeyed. For the student's comfort and safety, he/she must abide by the following:

- Be on time. Buses must meet a schedule.
- Respect personal property while waiting at a stop.
- As the bus approaches, form a single line. Do not move toward the bus until it stops.
- Enter the bus in an orderly manner and take a seat.
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Quiet conversation is encouraged. Do not distract the driver by loud talk or shouting.
- Appropriate language must be used at all times.
- Students in possession of cell phones, tablets or smart watches will not film or photograph other students.
- Do not offend pedestrians or passengers in other vehicles by shouting out of windows or making obscene gestures.
- Nothing is to be thrown or tossed within the bus or out of the bus.
- The carrying of weapons or any object that may be used as a weapon on the bus is prohibited by State Law.
- Do not bring cigarettes, matches or lighters to school. Smoking is not allowed.
- Get on and off at a regular stop. Do not request special consideration.
- Pupils who deface the bus will be held liable for its repair. Should you note any damage, report it immediately to the driver.
- Any student who loses the privilege of riding the bus due to misconduct is still required to attend school.
- Students and parents are invited to discuss any bus problem with the principal or assistant principal.

## **Safety Guidelines**

Safety awareness and the prevention of accidents are important safety goals of each school. Parents are urged to assist their children in following these safety guidelines:

- Start for school early enough to arrive without rushing. Plan to be at the school 5-10 minutes before the late bell.
- Walk on the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the road facing oncoming traffic.
- Refuse to approach or enter strange automobiles. Invitations to do so should be reported at home and at school.
- Proceed directly to school or home before beginning to play.
- Be considerate of smaller children.
- Refrain from throwing snowballs on the way to or from school.
- Remain on the school grounds while school is in session.
- Cross streets only after looking carefully in each direction.

## **Toys/Personal Devices**

Toys and devices such as cell phones, tablets, smart watches, games, etc. are not to be used during the school day. If visible, they will be taken from the student and held until the end of the school day for the first offense. Subsequent violations will result in disciplinary action including devices being taken from the student and held until parents pick them up. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen articles. Therefore, it is recommended that these items not be brought to school.

## **Video Surveillance**

The Board of Education, having carefully weighed and balanced the rights of privacy of students and staff against the district's duty to maintain order and discipline, finds that it is appropriate to provide for the use of video camera surveillance in its transportation vehicles and on school grounds. Video surveillance shall only be used to promote the order, safety and security of students, staff and property.

## **Weather Emergencies**

Schools will be closed when weather conditions make it hazardous to transport children to the assigned schools. Notice of such closing is broadcast on local radio stations beginning at 6:00 a.m., through the ParentSquare communications platform, and on the district website at [www.grotonschools.org](http://www.grotonschools.org). Please listen to the radio or television and check your messages and do not call the school, central office, police or radio stations. NOTE: it is important that your contact number be kept up-to-date with your child/children's school so that you receive all messages.

Should weather conditions develop during the day which would make bus travel dangerous, an early dismissal will be called. To prepare for the possibility of an unplanned early dismissal, it is suggested that parents arrange an alternate place for children to go in the event that no one is at home.

It is also possible that school opening will be delayed 2 hours when it appears that conditions will improve. Selected radio, television stations, ParentSquare, and our web site will carry the announcement for "no school" or delayed openings. Normal delayed openings will be 2 hours unless otherwise notified. Tune into any of the following for this information:

WBMW 106.5 FM  
WCTY 97.7 FM  
WICH 1310 AM

I98.3 FM  
WFSB TV – Channel 3  
WTNH TV – Channel 8

WKNL 100.9 FM  
WNLC 98.7 FM  
Channel 19 WILI 1400 AM

WVIT TV – Channel 30  
GPS –

ParentSquare is Groton Public Schools communications platform. The Superintendent will send messages via ParentSquare to the email and/or designated numbers to notify families of delays or cancellations.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **Fire Drill**

Fire drills and lockdown drills are conducted during the school year. During a fire drill, students must pass quickly and silently in a single file to the nearest exit as directed by the teacher and remain with their class. Directions for this procedure will be found in each classroom near the exit door. After the drill, students will return to their classes at the direction of the teacher.

### **Lockdown Drill**

For a drill or in the event of an emergency, a code red lockdown may be initiated. When a “code red” is announced, students and school personnel shall go to the nearest classroom, remain outside or remain in another appropriate location until “code green” is announced. Directions for code red are posted near the exit door in all classrooms.

### **Potassium Iodide Pills**

Potassium Iodide (KI) pills are available for all students. In the event of an accident at any of the nearby nuclear reactors, it is possible that radioactive iodine could be released into the atmosphere. Radioactive iodine can be absorbed into the thyroid gland. Potassium iodide, also known by its chemical name “KI”, is an over-the-counter drug that protects the thyroid gland from radioactive iodine. Your child’s school has been stocked with enough KI pills for all staff and students. All parents/guardians are asked to fill out a potassium iodide (KI) student medication authorization form. This form must be filled out only once for the time the student is enrolled at the Groton Public Schools. This form is available from the school nurse.

## **FOOD SERVICES**

The Groton Board of Education offers, where facilities permit, a program of food services as a participant in the National School Lunch Program. Prices may be subject to change by the Groton Board of Education. Free and reduced price lunches and free milk are available to eligible children. A breakfast program is available at all schools. At the beginning of each school year, an application form and explanatory letters are sent to all parents. SchoolCafe.com is available to pay for meals and provides several benefits including:

- Speeds up serving lines in the cafeteria, providing more time for students to eat their meals.
- Eliminates the worry of lost or forgotten lunch money.
- Ensures that your student will receive a nutritious meal.

## **DRESS CODE**

School dress may be regulated and students are encouraged to dress in clothing appropriate to the school setting. Restrictions on freedom of expression may be applied whenever the mode of dress is unsafe, disruptive, or contrary to law.

Any school dress which impairs the safety or increases the risk to self or others, causes discomfort to others (e.g. uncleanliness, inappropriate language), causes distraction or disruption of the learning environment, advertises or advocates the use of alcohol or drugs, pornography, or inherently contains unreasonable potential to hurt or upset others, is prohibited.

The following guidelines will be used in judging appropriateness of clothing worn in school:

1. Students must wear foot apparel in schools at all times, which is appropriate and safe for school. Slippers, or any type of foot apparel with wheels, are not allowed.
2. Clothing and accessories must be free of offensive signs, slogans or language.
3. Clothing that exposes undergarments is prohibited.
4. Pajamas, capes, and blankets are not permitted at school.
5. Students must wear a shirt/top that is secure with fabric on the front, back, and on the sides under the arms and extends to the navel.
6. Students must wear bottoms that are secure (pants, sweatpants, shorts, skirt, dress, and/or leggings), extend to the leg (covers the bottom) and must be worn to the waist.
7. Final decisions regarding appropriate clothing rest with the administration.

## **CELL PHONES AND OTHER PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Our school recognizes the potential benefits of technology in education, but we also believe that a focused learning environment is essential for our students' success. This policy outlines the acceptable use of electronic devices to ensure a safe and productive school day for everyone. An electronic device includes cell phones, Smartwatches and fitness trackers, tablets (e.g., iPads, Kindle Fire), handheld gaming systems, and headphones or earbuds. During school hours, all electronic devices, including cell phones and Smartwatches, must be turned off and stored away in a backpack, locker, or assigned cubby from the time students enter the building until dismissal. Devices should not be visible or used during instructional time, lunch, recess, or any school-sponsored activities. We understand that parents may need to contact their children. In case of an emergency, please contact the school office directly, and we will ensure your child receives the message. Students are also permitted to contact their parent/guardian during the school day from the office if necessary. The school is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged personal electronic devices. We strongly encourage students to leave valuable devices at home.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES**

The complete text of all Board of Education policies is available for review in each school and in the Central Administrative Office. Selected policies are summarized in this handbook for student and parent information.

### **Appropriate Use of Technology - (Policy #6141.321)**

Groton Public Schools (GPS) provides its students and staff access to a multitude of technology resources with the understanding that these resources provide opportunities to enhance learning and improve communication within our community and with the global community. The advantages of having access to these resources are far greater than the potential difficulties they may bring. However, with the privilege of access comes personal responsibility to use the resources appropriately.

The district's policies are intended to promote the most effective, safe, productive, instructionally sound and honest uses of networked information and communication tools. Students' use of technology at school shall be for educational purposes only. The district makes a good faith effort to protect its students from exposure to Internet materials that are harmful or explicit by maintaining a system of Internet content filtering devices and software controls that meet federal standards established in the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The district also educates students and staff on responsible use of technology including Internet resources and communication tools.

## **Digital Citizenship**

As it supports students to develop the citizenship skills necessary to function in society, Groton Public Schools understands its responsibility to help students develop digital citizenship skills, as the Internet and electronic communication has become ubiquitous in the 21st century. Digital citizenship skills enable students to use information and technology in safe, legal, and responsible ways. Administrators, teachers, and staff are expected to model good digital citizenship skills for students in the same manner they model all expected behaviors. Students will receive instruction on the concepts and skills involved in digital citizenship.

A responsible digital citizen is one who:

### **Respects One's Self:**

- Users show respect for themselves by understanding online behavior is a reflection and representation of oneself. They select online names that are appropriate, consider the information and images posted online as public expressions of themselves, and do not post personal information.

### **Respects Others:**

- Users show respect for others online. They refrain from using technology to bully, tease, insult, inflame, harass or discriminate and in general, disrespect others. They do not visit sites that are degrading, pornographic, racist or otherwise inappropriate in the school setting. They do not violate others' access to material or others' files, online spaces, or material and never borrow, use or misappropriate another's identity, online password/or another's work product.

### **Protects One's Self:**

- Users protect themselves by not posting any information including images that may put them at risk. They do not post personal details or contact information or otherwise share private information. They report any attacks or inappropriate behavior directed at them or other abuse. They protect passwords, accounts and resources.

### **Protects Others:**

- Users protect others online by not putting others at risk and taking care to not offend others. They report abuse and do not create, forward or disseminate in any manner inappropriate materials, images or communications. Users do not visit degrading, pornographic, racist or other inappropriate sites.

### **Respects Intellectual Property:**

- Users understand online resources are the creation of others. They request permission to use resources as necessary, suitably cite any and all use of websites, books, media, etc. and abide by fair use rules.

### **Protects Intellectual Property:**

- Users adhere to copyright laws and agreements. They seek permission to use the software and media others produce. They act with integrity when dealing with licensed music, software and other media.

### **Responsibilities (NOT IN POLICY)**

- The user is responsible for all of his/her actions and activities involving technology, including personal portable technology. Examples of user responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:
  - Keeping all school accounts and passwords confidential.
  - Logging on school technology with your own user identification and password.
  - Logging off when leaving the computer.
  - Using the computers or other technology with teacher permission and supervision.
  - Taking precautions to prevent viruses.
  - Using permissible personal technology only for educational purposes and in designated areas and at designated times.

## **Unacceptable Use (NOT IN POLICY)**

- Examples of prohibited conduct include but are not limited to the following:
  - Using the instructional network or Internet access for commercial business, political or religious advocacy purposes, solicitation or illegal activities of any kind.
  - Access or dissemination of obscene or pornographic material.
  - Sending material critical of or which may be offensive or objectionable to others, or using the network or Internet to threaten or harass others.
  - Engaging in cyber bullying
  - Harassing network users, infiltrating computing systems and/or damaging software components.
  - Making any unauthorized entry to or alteration of any document, either paper or electronic, not created by the user.
  - Sharing one's account with anyone or leaving an account open or unattended.
  - Disclosing personal information about oneself or another student.
  - Subscribing to online services without approval of district staff.
  - Deliberately misusing the network and its peripherals.
  - Installing software.
  - Intentionally bypassing the network filters.
  - Tampering with the hardware or software or system configuration.
  - Accessing executables from external sources.

## **Regulations**

The Board of Education directs the Superintendent or his designee to develop accompanying regulations to provide specific guidance for students in their use of district technology and personal technology including the use of social media both in and outside of school as well as guidance for staff in their use of technology with students. This guidance shall address staff responsibilities to educate students about appropriate and safe online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms as well as cyberbullying awareness and response.

## **Consequences for Violation**

The Superintendent will set forth in the regulations consequences for violation of this policy, its regulations and other unacceptable use of technology. Such consequences may include revocation of privileges, disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from school, and/or legal action. The Groton Board of Education reserves the right to cooperate with law enforcement officers in investigations related to illegal activities conducted by students in their use of technology.

## **Student Conduct - (Policy #5131)**

**Principal** – The principal may implement necessary procedures and rules and regulations not inconsistent with applicable provisions of law to render effective the policies of the Board of Education relating to standards of student behavior. The principal may involve representatives of all areas of school personnel, students, parents, and citizens of the community.

**Teachers** – Teachers shall be responsible for the instruction of students in rules and regulations of proper conduct, as well as be responsible for proper and adequate control of students. The responsibility and authority of any teacher extends to all students of the school district under the assigned supervision of the teacher and to other students so situated with respect to the teacher as to be subject to the teacher's control.

**Parents** - Parents shall be expected to cooperate with school authorities regarding the behavior of their children. Parents shall be held responsible for the willful and chronic misbehavior of their children.

**Students** – Students shall be properly instructed in rules and regulations of acceptable conduct; they shall then be responsible for understanding and complying with the standards of behavior described herein. Any student who fails to comply with these rules and regulations concerning student behavior is liable to suspension, in-school suspension, or expulsion.

### **Attendance - (Policy #5113)**

The Groton Board of Education (Board) believes that consistent school attendance is crucial for student success. The instructional experiences provided in school are vital components of a child's learning process.

Regular student attendance is essential to the educational process and is a key factor in the success students achieve in school. Responsibility for ensuring that students attend school rests by statute with the parent/guardian or other person having legal responsibility for the child.

The Board requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent.

Connecticut state law requires parents to ensure that their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, attend school regularly during the hours that school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

Students are considered to be in attendance if present at their assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school; for at least half of the regular school day. Students who are serving out-of-school suspension or expulsion should be considered absent. Students not meeting the definition of “in attendance” shall be considered absent.

When children are absent from school without notification from a parent or guardian, school staff must make a reasonable effort to contact the parent or guardian by phone or electronic communication.

### **Mental Health Day**

Students enrolled in grades K-12 are permitted by state law two non-consecutive, non-documented mental health days during the school year to attend to their emotional and psychological well-being.

### **Excused Absences for Children of Service Members**

Students, ages five to eighteen, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103 and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year, and at the discretion of the Board additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment. In the case of such excused absences such children and parents or legal guardians shall be responsible for obtaining assignments prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed.

### **Dismissal**

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent/designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission by the principal/designee.

## **Attendance Regulations**

Regular attendance at school contributes significantly to the academic and social growth of children. The administration, faculty, and staff shall affect a cooperative effort in each school to encourage the highest rate of student attendance. Connecticut State Law requires all parents/guardians to assure that their children attend school regularly. Administrators, faculty, and staff shall encourage and support parents/guardians in fulfilling this legal obligation. To fulfill these responsibilities, these administrative regulations shall detail the procedures to be followed in each school to implement board of education policy 5113.

## **Attendance Definitions**

**Tardy:** Any student who arrives at school after the designated start time.

**Absence:** Any day (more than 50%) in which a student is not in attendance.

**Chronically Absent Child:** An enrolled student whose total number of all absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

**Excused Absence:** A student's absence from school shall be considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school 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 to school officials.
- B. Absences resulting from a student enrolled in grades K-12, taking two mental health days during the school year. Such absence is to permit the student to attend to their emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school. For purposes of school year limitation, such absence shall be identified as a "mental health wellness day." A student cannot take these mental health days during consecutive school days.
- C. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
  1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the 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 (documentation required);
  5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
  6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

**Unexcused Absence:** Any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one half of the school day, which is not excused or considered a disciplinary absence.

**Truancy:** Any student who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.

## **Attendance Procedures**

School personnel shall seek cooperation from parents or other persons having control of such child and assist them in remedying and preventing truancy and chronic absenteeism. The Superintendent of Schools shall develop

regulations which will detail the following school district obligations under the District's attendance/truancy policies and procedures.

1. Notify parents annually of their obligations under the attendance policy.
2. Obtain telephone numbers for PowerSchool or other means of contacting parents or other persons having control of the child during the school day.
3. Establish a system to monitor student attendance.
4. Develop a [MTSS-tiered response model](#) to each school's absence plan to assist and support families.
5. Establish attendance teams at the District and school levels to review and address both truancy and chronic absenteeism issues based on the District and schools' chronic absenteeism rates.
6. Make a reasonable effort by telephone and/or electronic communication to notify parents/guardians when a child does not arrive at school, and there has been no previous approval or other communication that indicates parents are aware of the absence. ~ (Note: Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to this section shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice).
7. Identify a student as truant when the student accumulates four unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences in any school year. Report this information annually to the CSDE.
8. Identify a student as chronically absent when the student has missed 10% or more of the school year. Report this information annually to the CSDE.
9. Notify parents/guardians in writing of a child identified as truant and/or chronically absent and meet with them to review and evaluate the situation within ten (10) days of such designation. Such meeting may involve representatives of the school attendance team and may provide recommendations for family services. If the parent or guardian of the child fails to attend the required meeting with appropriate school personnel to evaluate why the child is truant or fails to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the child's chronic absenteeism problem, consideration can then be made to refer the family to the Department of Children and Family (DCF) for educational neglect.
10. In addition to the procedures specified above, a regular education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to the building's MTSS Team to consider the need for an evaluation, interventions and/or support (e.g., 504, PPT).

Students identified as truant or chronically absent may be subject to 1) retention in the same grade to acquire necessary skills for promotion; 2) a requirement to complete a summer school program successfully before being promoted.

### **Family Travel/Vacation**

Parents are discouraged from taking students on vacation when school is in session. Such absences are disruptive to schooling and should be avoided if at all possible. Making up the work missed is not the same as participating in the classes where instruction is given. If such an absence is unavoidable, the student is responsible to ascertain what work has been missed upon his/her return and ensure that the work be completed within a reasonable time. Teachers are not required to provide work in advance of the absence. If circumstances demand that students accompany their parents during the school year, the following provisions apply:

1. The parent/guardian or other person legally responsible for the student must notify the main office in advance of the extended absence.
2. Excused absence requirements apply. Any vacation days that surpass 9 total absences for the student will not be excused.
3. The number of days missed will be counted in the total number of days allowable in determining course credit for high school students.

## **Disciplinary Action for Class Cuts**

For any absence determined to be a “class cut” (cut), the student will earn an "F" for all quizzes, tests, and other work missed in that class period. For each cut, teachers should follow the Fitch High School Student Handbook. Notification of the cut and the action taken will be made to the student's parent or guardian.

## **Pledge of Allegiance - (Policy #6115.4)**

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal decision not to recite the Pledge, such student may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their philosophy, belief, or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

## **Sexual Harassment - Policy 5145.5/4118.112**

The Groton Public Schools recognize that sexual harassment, including sexual assault, is unlawful sex discrimination. The Board of Education (Board) prohibits sex discrimination/sexual harassment in the District’s education program or activities. Education program or activity includes locations, events, or circumstances over which the school exercises substantial control over both the respondent (alleged perpetrator of sexual harassment) and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs. In addition to occurring on school grounds, sexual harassment may potentially occur off campus, in places or situations where athletic and extracurricular activities occur, on field trips, on the school bus, at school related conferences, or through use of school technology.

Schools shall respond to sexual harassment occurring in the District’s education program or activities for which they have “actual knowledge.” “Actual knowledge” means notice of sexual harassment or an allegation of sexual harassment brought to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator, any official of the school who has authority to institute corrective measures on the behalf of the school, as well as to any other employee of an elementary or secondary school.

Sexual harassment may take the form of student-on-student, employee-on-student, employee-on-employee, student-on-employee, or may be perpetrated against students or employees by third parties under the control of the District. Students who engage in proven sexual harassment may be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion. Employees who engage in proven sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as well as, other action required under the law including but not limited to a referral to DCF for suspected child abuse.

## **Definition of Sexual Harassment for the Purposes of Title IX**

Sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- (i) A school employee conditioning an education benefit or service on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (i.e. quid pro quo)
- (ii) Unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would determine is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the District’s education program or activity;
- (iii) “Sexual assault” as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092 (f)(6)(A)(v)(the Clery Act), “dating violence” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), “domestic violence” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or “stalking” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30) (the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)).

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- pressure for sexual activity
- repeated remarks with sexual or sexually demeaning implications
- unwelcome or inappropriate touching
- sexual assault

- suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats
- concerning a student's grades or academic standing or an employee's employment status
- telling lewd jokes or sharing stories about sexual experiences – even if not directed at an individual but done in his/her presence to cause him/her discomfort
- sending unwanted suggestive or lewd emails, letters or other communications or sharing images of a sexual nature around the workplace or displaying posters, items, or screensavers of a sexual nature
- repeatedly asking for dates despite being rebuffed
- making sexually offensive gestures or facial expressions
- dating violence or stalking

### **Other Definitions**

“Complainant” is defined as a person who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

“Respondent” is defined as a person who is alleged to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

“Supportive measures” are defined as non-disciplinary, non-punitive, individualized services, offered as appropriate and without charge to a complainant or respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint, or where no complaint has been filed.

### **Title IX Coordinator**

The Superintendent of Schools shall designate and authorize the Director of Pupil Personnel Services to be the District's Title IX Coordinator. This individual shall be given the title of, and shall be referred to as, the Title IX Coordinator and shall be responsible for ensuring compliance across the District with Title IX, corresponding state law, and applicable Board policy concerning sex discrimination/sexual harassment.

Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, or legal guardians of elementary and secondary school students, employees, and, all unions shall be notified of the name or title, office address, electronic mail address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator.

The Title IX Coordinator's contact information shall be posted on the District's website and included in student and employee handbooks and published in other locations as deemed appropriate.

### **Reporting Sexual Harassment**

Any person, including, but not limited to, students, parents or guardians, employees, bystanders, or third parties (whether or not the person is the alleged victim), may report sexual harassment, including sexual assault, occurring in the District's education program or activities. Reporting may occur in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail, using the contact information provided for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report. Reports may be made at any time, including during non-business hours.

A formal complaint is defined as a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against an individual and requesting that the District investigate the alleged sexual harassment. In an instance where the Title IX Coordinator signs the complaint, the Title IX Coordinator is not a party to the complaint nor is such action taken on behalf of the complainant.

The Title IX Coordinator will make forms available for both informal reports and formal complaints of sexual harassment. Additionally, such forms will be posted on the District's website. Informal reports are permissible and may be brought by any person. However, only a complainant and the District's Title IX Coordinator may file a formal complaint. All formal complaints shall be investigated. Supportive measures shall be offered to a complainant with or without the filing of a formal complaint.

There is no time limit on a complainant's decision to file a formal complaint, but complainants are encouraged to report incidents of sexual harassment promptly, and/or to file a formal complaint.

### **Response including Supportive Measures**

Any school employee with actual knowledge of sex discrimination/sexual harassment shall promptly inform the District's Title IX Coordinator. The failure to do so may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Upon actual knowledge of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will promptly contact the complainant to advise and discuss with the complainant 1) the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint, 2) the right to file a formal complaint, and 3) how to file a formal complaint.

A complainant, as well as a respondent shall be offered free, individualized "supportive measures" (e.g. counseling, course related adjustments, modification of work or class schedules, escort services, increased security/monitoring of certain areas, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties) designed to restore or preserve equal access to education with or without a formal complaint. These, as well as other measures, may be part of a final remedy.

Upon the filing a formal complaint, the complainant will be provided with a copy of this policy and its grievance procedures.

Written notice shall be provided to the respondent and to the complainant advising that a formal complaint has been filed. The respondent shall be entitled to a presumption of innocence during investigation of the complaint. Both parties will be treated fairly throughout the investigation and shall be entitled to an unbiased investigator who has not prejudged the matter being investigated.

Complaints that fail to allege a violation of Title IX shall be dismissed without investigation. This does not preclude the school administration from investigating or addressing the underlying conduct under relevant codes of conduct or board policy.

### **Emergency Removal/Administrative Leave**

An emergency removal of a respondent from the education program or activity is permissible provided that the District conducts an individualized safety and risk analysis and determines that emergency removal is necessary to protect a student or other individual from an immediate threat to physical health or safety and notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision is provided. This does not modify any rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

An employee-respondent may be placed on administrative leave during the pendency of a grievance process.

### **Informal Resolution**

At any point in the formal complaint process, the Districtwide Title IX Coordinator, in his/her discretion, may offer to facilitate an informal resolution option such as mediation or restorative justice.

Both parties must give voluntary, informed written consent.

Either party has a right to withdraw consent at any time, in which case the formal investigation shall proceed.

The informal resolution process shall not be available if the complainant/victim is a student and the respondent is an employee.

## **Grievance Procedures**

The District will promptly and thoroughly investigate all formal complaints of sexual harassment in accordance with established grievance procedures. District grievance procedures shall be established in the form of a regulation accompanying this Policy.

The grievance procedure shall be used for the reporting and investigation of, and response to, a formal complaint of sexual harassment in the District's education program and activities against a person in the United States.

The District's grievance procedures shall be designed to comply with the regulation under Title IX as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education, as it may be amended from time to time. Among other required provisions, the grievance procedures shall establish standards for fairness and equity, including a requirement that the decision maker not be the same individual as the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator shall:

- Explain how to file a complaint;
- address required notice;
- set out timelines for various components of the investigation and adjudication process;
- establish and explain grounds for the dismissal of a complaint;
- provide and explain the appeal process available to both parties;
- include a presumption of innocence for the respondent;
- state the evidence standard to be used to determine responsibility;
- require objective evaluation of all available evidence.

## **Training**

Training shall be provided to Title IX personnel in accordance with the regulation under Title IX as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education, as it may be amended from time to time. Additional training may be provided to all school employees as deemed advisable.

## **Prohibition Against Retaliation**

Retaliation against any party, witness, or other participant to the grievance process is prohibited. Retaliation may form a basis for a complaint under this policy. The charging of a person with a code of conduct violation based upon a person making a materially false statement in bad faith in an investigation is not considered retaliatory.

## **Dissemination, Posting, and Discussion of Policy**

This policy along with its accompanying regulation/grievance procedure shall appear in the Student Handbook, be discussed with students at least annually and more often as needed, be posted in prominent and accessible locations in each school building and in the Board of Education offices, and be published on the District's website along with the name/title and contact information for the Title IX Coordinator.

## **Record Keeping**

The District shall keep records related to reports of alleged sexual harassment for a minimum of seven years, including investigation records, disciplinary sanctions, remedies, appeals, and records of any action taken, including supportive measures. Additionally, the Districts must also keep for a minimum of seven years any materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, any employee designated to facilitate an informal process.

## **Alternate Complaint Procedures**

In addition, or as an alternative to the filing of a sex discrimination/sexual harassment complaint through the District's grievance procedure, a person may choose to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education.

## Statement of Protected Rights

Application of this policy and its grievance procedure shall not be interpreted to restrict rights protected under the U.S. Constitution, including the right to free speech, to be free from self-incrimination, and to due process of law.

## School Climate Policy

All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

Implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to achieving these goals.

This policy sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation, and serves to actualize the Connecticut School Climate Standards, as detailed herein.

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

## Definitions

1. **"School climate"** means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.
2. **"Positive Sustained School Climate"** is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:
  - A. Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.
  - B. People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected, and solve problems restoratively.
  - C. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
  - D. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and
  - E. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.
3. **"Social and emotional learning"** means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
4. **"Emotional intelligence"** means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) using emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication, (C) understanding and identifying emotions, and (D) managing emotions in oneself and others.
5. **"Bullying"** means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.
6. **"School environment"** means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop, or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by the Board of Education (Board), and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

7. **"Cyberbullying"** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephones, or other mobile electronic devices, or any other electronic communication.
8. **"Teen dating violence"** means any act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in, or who have recently been in a dating relationship.
9. **"Mobile electronic device"** means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, text messaging devices, paging devices, personal digital assistants, laptop computers, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or digital video disks or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.
10. **"Electronic communication"** means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole, or in part, by wire, radios, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical systems.
11. **"School climate improvement plan"** means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices, and relational practices that prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.
12. **"Restorative practices"** means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring that each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.
13. **"School climate survey"** means a research-based, validated and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees, and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan.
14. **"Connecticut school climate policy"** means the school climate policy developed, updated, and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to [section 10-222q of the general statutes](#), as amended by this act, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.
15. **"School employee"** means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator, or coach employed by the Board, or (B) any other individual who, in the performance of duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public school, pursuant to a contract with Groton Public Schools.
16. **"School community"** means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the Board, volunteers, and school employees.
17. **"Challenging behavior"** means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.
18. **"Evidence Based Practices"** in education means instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

19. **"Effective School Climate Improvement"** means a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:
- A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;
  - B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and to inform the improvement process;
  - C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts, thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;
  - D. Building among school personnel and developing common staff skills to educate the whole child;
  - E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as to address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and
  - F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:
    - a. Climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
    - b. Infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
    - c. Implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
    - d. Evaluation of the school climate improvement process;
    - e. Sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.
  - G. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity.

### **Challenging Behavior Reporting Form**

The Challenging Behavior Reporting Form is intended to be used by students, parents, or staff to report incidents of challenging behavior including bullying or cyber-bullying. See link below to access the form.

<https://www.grotonschools.org/parent-and-students/student-handbooks>

### **Tiered Response**

Beyond the above protocols and supports, the new school climate policy defines a specific subset of challenging behavior that requires districts to respond with certain tiered interventions (referred to hereinafter as “tiered response incidents”). Pursuant to [C.G.S. Sec. 10-222hh\(b\)\(6\)](#), a tiered response (as detailed in the table below) is required for an incident of challenging behavior that meets any of the following criteria:

- a. requires temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students to reduce the likelihood of injury;
- b. indicates a credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others; or
- c. results in an injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid (or less severe injuries caused by the same person on more than one occasion, as verified by a school nurse or other medical professional).

The law goes on to provide that, if a district determines that conduct meets the above criteria, school climate improvement plans must include the following responses:

Occasion Number – Tiered Response Incident	Tiered Intervention Required
First Offense	Principal must notify the parents/guardians of each student involved in a manner that complies with FERPA.
Second Offense	Principal must invite the parent/guardian of involved students to a meeting (virtual or in person) to discuss supports and interventions applicable to each student – including, but not limited to, restorative practices.
Multiple Subsequent Offenses (or single incident that causes severe harm)	Principal must notify the parents/guardians of involved students of other resources for supports and interventions, including, but not limited to the following: the 2-1-1 Infoline Program; services/programs available through the Behavioral Health Partnership, established through <a href="#">C.G.S. Sec. 17a-22h</a> ; or other resources for professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

### National School Climate Standards

In accordance with Public Act 11-232, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws, the Groton Public Schools has developed a Safe School Climate Plan which is based on the National School Climate Standards. The plan, which is available on the district’s website, presents a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate through the implementation of the following standards:

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate.
2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting:
  - a. The development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement; and
  - b. A comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.
3. The school community’s practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
  - a. Promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students.
  - b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities
  - c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
  - d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.
4. The school community creates a school environment where *everyone* is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.
5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### Physical Examinations - (Policy #5141.31)

**Sports Physicals** - It is the Policy of the Board of Education to require physicals for participation in sports. Physicals for participation in sports for athletes shall be required within thirteen months prior to the date the student is to participate in interscholastic sports. Documentation of this physical must be placed in the student’s health record.

The Board of Education recommends that all physicals be performed by the student’s own physician. If, for some reason, this is not feasible, the school will assist the parent in contacting the *School Based Health Center*.

**Mandated Physicals** - It is the Policy of the Board of Education to require periodic health assessments prior to Kindergarten, Sixth and Tenth grades, unless objected to in writing on religious grounds by the parents or guardian of the student (or by the student if age 18 or over). No record of such medical examination shall be open to public inspection.

### **Suspension/Expulsion - (Policy #5114)**

All employees in the school system shall have an obligation to monitor the behavior of students and to report student misbehavior in accordance with the terms of the Groton Board of Education policy on Suspension/Expulsion. A complete description of the board's policy is included with this student handbook.

Definitions of significant words and phrases in the policy and the sections of the policy are included here. *Refer to the policy to fully understand the expulsion/Suspension topic.*

**Note to students:** If for any reason you are in possession of anything that you have a question about, discuss this with any adult in the school.

### **Definitions:**

A. **Bullying** is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- a) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property,
- b) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- c) creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- d) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- e) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but is not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Bullying may take many forms, such as, but not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks;
2. taunts, name-calling or discriminatory slurs, including but not limited to insulting, disparaging or derogatory comments regarding a person's race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national or ethnic background, disability, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, or a student's association with a person or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;
3. threats and intimidation;
4. extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
5. cyberbullying.

B. **Controlled substance** means a drug or other substance identified under schedules I, II, III, IV, or V in Section 202(c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 USC 812 (c)). 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(1). "Illegal drug" means a controlled substance, but does not include a controlled substance that is legally possessed or used under the supervision of a licensed health care professional, or that is legally possessed or used under any other authority under that Act or under any other provision of federal law. 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(2).

- C. **Cyberbullying** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone, or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.
- D. **Dangerous instrument** is any instrument, article, substance or device which is capable of causing death or serious physical injury, or which poses a serious threat to school personnel, students or property, including by way of example, but not limited to any knife with a metal blade or a razor, utility knife, box cutter, or any instrument, article or substance which, under the circumstances in which it is used or attempted or threatened to be used, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury to persons or property.
- E. **Deadly weapon** is any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles, as defined in C.G.S. 53a-3(6).
- F. **Emergency** is a situation under which the continued presence of the student in school poses such a danger to persons or property or such a disruption of the educational process that a hearing may be delayed until a time as soon after the exclusion of the student as possible.
- G. **Expulsion** is the exclusion from school privileges for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, and is deemed to include, but not be limited to, exclusion from the school to which the student in grades three to twelve, inclusive was assigned at the time the disciplinary action was taken, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond a period of one calendar year.
- H. **Exclusion** is any denial of public school privileges to a student for disciplinary purposes.
- I. **Firearm** is any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, the frame or receiver of any such weapon, any firearm muffler or firearm silencer, or any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas such as a bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, mine or any similar device, and excluding an antique firearm, as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921, as amended.
- J. **In-School Suspension** is the exclusion from regular classroom activity for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, but not exclusion from school, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond the end of the school year in which the in-school suspension was imposed.
- K. **Martial arts weapon** is a nunchaku, kama, kasari-fundo, octagon sai, tonfa or chinese star, as defined in C.G.S. 53a-3(21).
- L. **Removal** is the exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond ninety (90) minutes.
- M. The Part B regulations state that the term **serious bodily injury** has the same definition found at Section 1365(h)(3) of the U.S. criminal code, 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(3). That provision defines serious bodily injury as bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty. 18 USC 1365 (h)(3); 71 Fed. Reg. 46,722 (2006).
- N. The term **seriously disruptive of the educational process**, means a marked interruption or severe impediment of the day to day operation of the school. In making such a determination the administration may consider, but shall not be limited to: whether the incident occurred within close proximity of a school; whether other students from the school were involved, or whether there was any gang involvement; whether the conduct involved violence, threats of violence, or the unlawful use of a weapon, as defined in C.G.S. 29-38, and whether any injuries occurred; and whether the conduct involved the use of alcohol or drugs. This definition of "A seriously disruptive of the educational process" shall apply to all portions of this Policy.
- O. **Suspension** is the exclusion from school privileges, or from transportation services only, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond the end of the school year in which the suspension was imposed. A student in grades preschool to two, inclusive, may be given an out-of-school suspension if it is determined by the administration that such suspension is appropriate based on evidence that the student's conduct on school grounds is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons. In addition, it is a person's duty [as a mandated reporter] to report suspected child abuse or neglect is not limited by this provision.

- P. The definition of a **weapon** under the IDEA mirrors the definition of a "dangerous weapon" found in the U.S. criminal code. 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(4). The criminal code defines "dangerous weapon" as "a weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocket knife with a blade of less than 2.5 inches in length." 18 USC 930 (g)(2).

Suspension/Expulsion Policy Outline:

- Section I Definitions [provided above]
- Section II Removal of students from class
- Section III In-school suspension of students; Reassignment
- Section IV Suspension of students
- Section V Expulsion of students
  - A. Procedure
  - B. Special Education
  - C. Student records, transfer and withdrawals
  - D. Readmission
- Section VI Standards governing suspension and expulsion
  - A. Statutorily required expulsion proceedings
  - B. Statutorily prohibited expulsion or out-of-school suspension of preschoolers and students in kindergarten through grade two with certain exceptions
  - C. Statutorily required expulsion for students in grades K through 2 who commit certain offenses
  - D. Statutorily required expulsion of preschoolers who possess a firearm
- Section VII Notice of disciplinary policies and action
- Section VIII Statutory modification
- Section IX Exclusion from co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

**Dangerous Instruments - (Policy #5131.7)**

The Board of Education, concerned for the safety and welfare of all students and school personnel in school and at school sponsored activities, prohibits carrying of a dangerous instrument on, or introducing a dangerous instrument onto, school grounds or at school sponsored events or on any school vehicle.

Possession and/or use of any such dangerous instrument by a student shall result in an expulsion hearing, as required under Board of Education Policy 5114.

**Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco - (Policy #5131.6)**

It is the policy of the schools to take appropriate action in the handling of incidents in the schools involving the possession, sale and/or use of behavior affecting substances. These substances shall include but not be limited to alcohol and controlled substances as defined by the Penal Code of the State of Connecticut and inhalable substances (including gases, solvents, butane, propane, adhesives).

In the event that the student is under the influence of a drug or alcohol, or engaged in the illegal activity of possessing or selling drugs and/or alcohol, he/she will be suspended/expelled from school in accordance with the suspension/expulsion policy.

Personal privacy rights of students shall be protected as provided by law.

School properties may be inspected by school authorities in the interest of maintenance, health and safety. Inspections for the location of drugs, narcotics, liquor, weapons, poisons, and missing property are matters relating to health and safety and may be regarded as reasonable purposes for inspection by school personnel.

The Board is also concerned that other substances, not listed as “controlled substances”, such as contained in common household items and inhalants, if purposely used inappropriately, can also have a stimulant, depressant or hallucinogenic effect on students. Inappropriate use, possession, sale or distribution of these non-controlled substances will result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension and/or expulsion. Further, grade level appropriate education pertaining to proper use of these materials and the danger of abuse shall be presented.

Smoking and/or possession of tobacco products by students are prohibited in school buildings, on school grounds, at school activities, and on school buses at all times.

### **Psychotropic Drug Use - (Policy #5141.231)**

The Board of Education prohibits all school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any student enrolled within the school system. This shall not prohibit (nor require) a recommendation by the school’s medical staff, including school nurses and/or the District’s medical advisor, for evaluation by an appropriate medical practitioner. Further, upon the consent to the student’s parents or guardian, school personnel may consult with the medical practitioner regarding such use.

The refusal of a parent or other person having custody of a child to administer or consent to the administration of any psychotropic drug to the child shall not, in and of itself, constitute grounds for referral to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) unless such refusal causes such child to be neglected or abused, as defined in C.G.S § 46b-120.

### **Surveys of Students (Student Privacy) - (Policy #6162.51)**

All requests to conduct surveys, analyses or evaluations shall be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools for approval.

In this policy, “surveys, analyses, or evaluations” refer to methods of gathering data for research purposes.

No student shall be required as part of any program to submit to any survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

- A. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent;
- B. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family;
- C. Sex behavior or attitudes;
- D. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- E. Critical appraisals of others;
- F. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- G. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student’s parents; or
- H. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program without the prior written consent of the student’s parent/guardian.)

For the purpose of this policy, “instructional material” does not include academic tests or assessments.

All instructional materials, regardless of format, including teachers’ manuals, films, tapes or other supplementary material which will be used in connection with any such survey, analysis, or evaluation shall be available upon request for inspection by the student’s parent/guardian, or of the student, if he/she is 18 years of age or older. Academic tests and assessments are not included.

A parent may inspect, upon request, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to a student.

The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for implementing any procedures necessary to protect the privacy of participating students and to provide parents with access to surveys within a reasonable time before administration or distribution.

Parents shall have the opportunity to exclude their children from participating in such surveys, analyses, or evaluations; requests to exclude students from surveys shall be submitted within 48 hours of the administration of the survey.

Insofar as practicable acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which a research request is made or is approved only after the school year has begun. When this occurs, the school unit should notify parents far enough in advance for them to access surveys and related instructional materials and to exclude their children from participating, if desired.

### **Homeless Children and Youth - (Policy #5118.1)**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act, reauthorized in January 2002, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Homeless children and youth are defined as (A) individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (B) includes: (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; (iii) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii); and unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and are living in the above circumstances.

Children and youth who meet the federal definition of homeless will be provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as other children and youth in the District. Homeless children and youth will also have access to educational programs and other services if needed, to enable them to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students in the District are held. Homeless children and youth will not be separated from the mainstream school environment nor will they be denied enrollment based on lack of proof of residency or lack of documentation of required physical examinations and immunizations.

For additional information regarding the provision of education to homeless children or youth contact Denise A. Doolittle, District McKinney-Vento Liaison at 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or at 860- 572-2152.

### **Migrant Students - (Policy #6141.312)**

The Superintendent will develop and implement a program to address the needs of migrant children in the District. Migrant students are students who move with itinerant workers (parent(s)/guardian(s) who travel from one area to another in search of work. This program will include a means to:

1. Identify migrant students and assess their educational and related health and social needs.
2. Provide a full range of services to migrant students including applicable Title I programs, special education, gifted education, vocational education, language programs, counseling programs, and elective classes.
3. Provide migrant children with the opportunity to meet the same statewide assessment standards that all children are expected to meet.
4. Provide advocacy and outreach programs to migrant children and their families and professional development for district staff.
5. Provide parents/guardians an opportunity for meaningful participation in the program.

## **Migrant Education Program for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement**

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of migrant students will be involved in and regularly consulted about the development, implementation, operation, and evaluation of the migrant program.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of migrant students will receive instruction regarding their role in improving the academic achievement of their children.

For purposes of this policy, the term “migrant” student shall mean a student who is, or whose parent or legal guardian is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker and migratory fisher worker, and who, within the preceding thirty-six (36) months, has changed school districts to obtain, or for his/her parents to obtain, agricultural, fishing or dairy work.

# **HEALTH**

## **Asbestos Management**

The school district complies with Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA). Specifically accredited/certified persons will be utilized as required to inspect all school buildings for asbestos- containing material. Appropriate action will be taken to control the release of asbestos fibers upon completion of inspections. Corrective steps and long-range maintenance in a management plan shall be made available to all concerned persons and filed with the Department of Public Health.

Employees, parents and the public shall be notified of this plan. Records shall be maintained of the location of all known asbestos and records shall be maintained of all abatements. Further information concerning the school district’s procedures for asbestos control, removal and disposal can be found in the school district offices.

## **Pesticide/Herbicide Application Plan**

The use of pesticides/herbicides in the Groton schools is regulated. Pesticides/herbicides are not used at the elementary and middle schools in Groton.

## **Green Learning Program**

Environmentally preferable cleaning products that minimize the potential harmful impact on the environment and human health are chosen for use in the Groton schools. Products are chosen that meet or exceed standards approved by the Federal Department of Administrative Services in consultation with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection. Such products include but are not limited to general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners, glass cleaners, floor finishes, floor strippers, hand cleaners, and soaps. Employees, students, parents and others entering Groton Public School facilities are prohibited from bringing any cleaning products into the schools.

# **Groton Public Schools**

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Respect**

- Respect the learning process.
- Treat others as you would have them treat you.
- Understand, respect and celebrate diversity.
- Respect personal and school property.

### **Responsibility**

- Learn from mistakes.
- Be on time.
- Be prepared.
- Do your best every day.
- Dress appropriately.

### **Commitment**

- Be a committed learner.
- Participate in class every day.
- Be a productive citizen of the school community.
- Celebrate success.

# APPENDIX

# Groton Public Schools 2025-2026 School Calendar

## July 2025

0 days / 0 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

3, 4 July 4<sup>th</sup> Recess  
7-31 SpEd Summer School  
TBD Summer School 9-12 at FHS

## August 2025

3 days / 3 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

4-14 SpEd Ext ABA Summer Session  
20 Freshman Orientation  
27 First Day of School (K-12)  
29 First Day of School (Preschool, TK)

## September 2025

21 days / 24 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

1 Labor Day  
9 TLI-Early Dismissal

## October 2025

22 days / 46 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

7 TLI-Early Dismissal  
13 Columbus/Indigenous People's Day  
29-31 Parent/Teacher Conferences  
Early Dismissal (ES, MS, HS)

## November 2025

15 days / 61 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

4 Professional Development  
11 Veteran's Day  
26-28 Thanksgiving Recess

## December 2025

15 days / 76 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

9 TLI-Early Dismissal  
22-31 Winter Holiday Recess

## January 2026

19 days / 95 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

1, 2 Winter Holiday Recess  
13 TLI-Early Dismissal  
19 Martin Luther King Day

## February 2026

18 days / 113 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27

10 TLI-Early Dismissal  
16, 17 Presidents Day Recess

## March 2026

21 Days / 134 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

6 Professional Development  
10 TLI-Early Dismissal  
25-27 Parent/Teacher Conferences  
Early Dismissal (ES, MS, HS)

## April 2026

16 days / 150 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

3 Good Friday  
13-17 Spring Recess  
28 TLI-Early Dismissal

## May 2026

20 days / 170 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

12 TLI-Early Dismissal  
25 Memorial Day

## June 2026

10 days / 180 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

12 Tentative Last Day of School-Early Dismissal  
15-18 Snow Make-up Days  
19 Juneteenth  
FHS Graduation - TBD

GRADE LEVEL	MARKING PERIOD ENDS	REPORT CARDS ISSUED
Grades K - 5	Nov 24 Mar 11 June 12	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the marking period ends.
Grades 6 - 8	Oct 30 Jan 23 Apr 1 June 12	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the semester ends.
Grades 9 - 12	Oct 30 Jan 23 Apr 1 June 12	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the semester ends.

No School for Students - Professional Development, Holidays, School Recess
Early Dismissal - Parent/Teacher Conferences, TLI, Last Day of School