

2026-2027 Ehrman Crest Middle School STUDENT HANDBOOK



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Ehrman Crest Middle School! The staff and administration have worked hard to design a program of studies which you will find to be both diverse and challenging. Now it is up to you to put forth your best effort and take advantage of your many opportunities. Our middle school is specifically designed to meet the academic and developmental needs of adolescents. Several of the unique features include:

- An activity period, which provides students with an opportunity to sample a variety of activities.
- LEAD classroom and Team meetings which provide the opportunity for students and staff to participate in dialogue conducive to social and emotional development.
- An interdisciplinary curriculum, which creates connections between subject areas in order to enhance comprehension.
- Teaming, where students are organized into core teams which include, math, science, ELA and social studies.

BE PROUD OF YOUR SCHOOL!

Take good care of it and appreciate the efforts of others. You are fortunate to be a part of an outstanding school district which offers a comprehensive quality educational program. We have established a proud tradition and remain committed to excellence in the future.

Please read the following student handbook information carefully to find out about general procedures and important school policies.

AMENDMENTS TO THE HANDBOOK

It is possible that after the printing of this handbook, corrections or changes may be made. Students will be advised of additions or deletions. The most current version is available on our website.

SENECA VALLEY PORTAL

The SV Portal provides secure central access to all personalized resources available to SV parents/guardians and students. Available at this site for 24/7 viewing and/or updates are reports of student progress, contact/emergency information, health information, classroom calendar, sports forms, student excuses, early dismissals, and more.

To access the portal information, please utilize the SV Portal wallet cards that were mailed to you (multiple children within one family can be viewed with one card – individual cards are not needed for each child). If you are in need of a replacement wallet card, please contact the Central Office Front Desk at 724-452-6040, extension 1675 and one will be provided to you via U.S. Mail. Passwords and usernames cannot be supplied verbally over the phone. We apologize for the inconvenience; however this procedure is necessary due to the sensitivity of the information involved.

The parent portal can be found on the district homepage at <https://www.svsd.net> (icon tab can be found in top right hand corner) or by going to <https://portal.svsd.net/>.



SCHOOL MESSENGER

When Seneca Valley School District has a closing or delay, the district will first utilize School Messenger, a parent notification system, which will be programmed to call the primary phone number as listed for each child. In an emergency situation, or in the event that the district goes from a two-hour delay to a closure, an emergency call will be sent to all provided numbers per student (this is the primary number and up to two additional numbers provided per child) to ensure that the information reaches all those affected by the emergency or change in status.

School Messenger information will be collected/updated at the beginning of every school year, and parents are encouraged to update the parent portal with any changes.

The Seneca Valley School District will make every effort to close or delay school by 5:30 a.m. of the affected day. Delays that turn into closures will be made by 7:30 a.m. of the affected day. Please know that early dismissals will be avoided whenever possible, but if necessary, will be made by 11:00 a.m. of the affected day.

Please note the following regarding a two-hour delay:

- Afternoon and evening activities will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Please note the following regarding early dismissals / cancellations:

- NO after-school activities.
- NO home or away evening activities.
- NO groups will be permitted to assemble at any school facility.
- NO facilities will be used by rental groups.

When an early dismissal is called, all students are expected to board their regular bus and return home.

REPLACEMENT PLANNERS

Should a student misplace or damage their student planner, replacements are available in the office for a \$5.00 fee (cash only).

VISITOR PROCEDURES

Access to Seneca Valley School District buildings is restricted to visitors during the school day. Those wishing to gain entrance are required to be given access by office personnel. Please note that video cameras tape activity at all school entrances and in various parts of the buildings.

ALL visitors are required to provide their driver's license and information regarding time of visit and person/place they are visiting. Visitors will then be provided with a visitor badge that must always be worn while on school property.

Upon leaving the building, visitors are required to leave the visitor badge with the office staff, so that they may be taken out of the system.

We thank you in advance for following these procedures for the safety of all students and staff.

Student Services

School Counseling

Our counseling program is concerned with all phases of a student's development. Counselors assist students with personal and social issues that arise during the school day. The counselor will be available to help with academic issues and with beginning to look at future educational plans. Emphasis is directed toward personal, academic, and career growth that will prepare students as they transition into middle school.

Counselors are an integral part of the core team of teachers. They attend team meetings and act as a liaison for parents, teachers, and students.

Contact your child's school counselor if you have a question or concern about your student's progress:

- Ms. Burns, Grade 5 counselor
724-538-8800, ext. 7036.
- Ms. Steinmetz, Grade 6 counselor
724-538-8800, ext. 7039.

Seneca Valley Academy of Choice

The Academy of Choice provides students with a world-class virtual and performing arts education with opportunities to participate in a wide range of district activities and individualized instruction and support by **certified** and **highly qualified** members of the Seneca Valley School District professional teaching staff. Benefits include flexibility of scheduling, traveling and exploring career options! Please visit the Seneca Valley School District website for more information. You can also go directly to SVAOC [here](#).

MTSS Overview

Seneca Valley is committed to supporting the academic and behavioral success of every student. To help achieve this goal, we are implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)—a comprehensive framework that ensures all students receive the level of support they need to grow and succeed.

MTSS provides a continuum of evidence-based supports in reading, math, behavior, and social-emotional learning. Our intervention teams are trained to assess student progress, analyze data, and provide targeted instruction aligned to individual needs. This allows us to respond quickly and effectively when students need additional support or enrichment.

A key part of this process is What I Need (WIN) time. WIN is a 30-minute block built into the school day where students participate in small-group instruction based on their current progression of skills. These groups may focus on strengthening foundational skills or extending learning and are led by classroom teachers and/or interventionists. This is not part of special education but is designed to help all students build critical skills. Instruction is flexible and adjusted based on ongoing progress monitoring.

As part of our commitment to supporting the whole child, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is also embedded within MTSS. PBIS is a proactive, school-wide approach that teaches and reinforces positive behavior, creating a safe and respectful environment where students can learn and grow. It helps set clear expectations for behavior and provides consistent support to help students meet those expectations.

Parent communication and involvement are integral to the success of the MTSS framework. We value your insights and will work closely with you throughout the problem-solving process to ensure your child is supported every step of the way. Together, our collective efforts create a well-rounded, responsive approach to student growth.

Attendance (as per Policy #204) Student Absence:

When a student is absent, parents and/or guardians will be notified during the school day. Any excuses for absences should be submitted electronically on the portal under Attendance. If the student went to the doctor, a medical excuse should be provided so that the absence can be recorded as medically excused.

If it is your preference, students can submit a signed excuse from their parent or guardian to their homeroom teacher or the front office in lieu of the parent portal.

Failure on the parents'/guardians' part to provide an electronic or written explanation for the student within five (5) days of the student's return to school will result in the absence/tardy being marked unexcused. The fact that a parent / guardian provides a written explanation for the student's absence or tardy does not in itself qualify the absence as excused. The absence must be for a legal reason according to the law. **Under NO circumstances should a student be permitted to write his / her own excuse, even if it is signed by the parent / guardian. Such day(s) of absence(s) will be considered "Unexcused."**

Illness / injury may be verified by a medical doctor's excuse or parental note indicating the nature of the illness or injury. An uploaded electronic excuse (or a written excuse by the parent), will be accepted to excuse up to five (5) consecutive and/or twenty (20) days in session. After this time, the district will send notification to require parents/guardians to verify any future illness/injury with a specific written excuse from a medical doctor.

Note: After ten parent/guardian notes have been presented to verify chronic illness/ injury, a medical note may be required.

An excuse/letter may be provided by the student's doctor that states he/she may miss school due to a specific illness and parent must refer to that specified illness when writing an excuse for each subsequent absence. These absences will then be excused. A new excuse/ letter from a doctor must be provided every 90 days.

Making Up Missed Assignments

After an absence, it is the student's responsibility to see each teacher and make up all classroom assignments. Students will be afforded the same number of days to make up assignments as the duration of their absence (except for pre-approved education trips; learn more on page 8).

All homework requests should be made through the office by 9:00 a.m. as to the expected length of the absence and the need for homework assignments.

Parents can pick up their child's missed assignments by 3:30 p.m. on the day of the request.

Early Dismissals

Early dismissals from school require the parent to submit a request electronically via the parent portal under Attendance - submit an early dismissal. Acceptable reasons for early dismissal are medical appointments and family emergencies. Parents should plan to show photo ID and arrive 10-15 minutes before students are needed for dismissal to allow adequate time for students to report to the office. The student will be called to report to the office to meet his / her parent when the parent has arrived for early dismissal.

Early dismissals end at 3:05; after that, parents should get in the line for regular pickup at 3:25. Parents may park in the spaces in front of the offices for any early dismissals except from 11am-12:50pm; at these times, those spaces are reserved for kindergarten pickup/drop off, and parents should instead park in visitor parking and walk in to retrieve their students.

If someone other than a parent/guardian is picking up a student, parents may give permission for them to pick up via the parent portal - Attendance - submit an early dismissal - "person retrieving student", or via a telephone call to the office at 724-538-8800.

If a student is being picked up by a parent/guardian, and their assigned transportation by SVSD is to ride a bus, **the early dismissal MUST be submitted no later than 2:30pm.**

Report of Student Progress (RoSP)

This measure is based on PA Core Standards, current research, and effective instructional strategies. It communicates how students are progressing toward end-of-year grade level standards. These essential standards are the most important learning targets of the PA Standards and district curriculum.

The RoSP focuses on student learning and growth over time. Academic achievement is reported separately from work habits and behaviors.

Teachers use evidence of student learning to determine each student's level of proficiency on essential standards.

Student progress is measured with common proficiency scales and reported using the following proficiency on essential standards.

- **Exceeding** - Demonstrates understanding beyond the standard and applies learning in new and complex ways.
- **Meeting** - Consistently and independently demonstrates understanding of the standard
- **Progressing** - Is developing understanding and moving toward consistently meeting the standard
- **Beginning** - Demonstrating partial understanding and requires additional support to progress

Teacher continually assess student learning throughout the year. Because many standards are taught over multiple trimesters, students may not reach mastery until later in the school year.

Progress is reported each trimester, and families can access proficiency scales and view student progress through the Seneca Valley Portal.

For more information, please visit the District website.

CAFETERIA

Food Allergies

Parents of students with food allergies should inform the nurse's office in writing. They may fill out the special dietary form found on the SVSD Food Services website and return it to the nurse, who will communicate it with the cafeteria staff.

Due to the severity of peanut allergies, peanut products are not sold in the cafeteria.

Breakfast Program

Breakfast is available at all schools within the Seneca Valley School District each morning.

➤ Parents/Guardians are welcome to eat breakfast with your child(ren) on their birthday ONLY.

Lunch Program

All students are required to eat lunch in the cafeteria; however, they are always welcome to bring a packed lunch. Students who choose to bring a packed lunch may still purchase milk, snacks, and other food in the cafeteria. If students are bringing drinks from home, they should not be in glass containers.

The Seneca Valley School District Food Service Department uses a point-of-sale system called Etrition. We utilize this system to track/maintain student account balances, student purchases, free/reduced meal benefits, and monitor allergies. Each student has a unique PIN that can be typed into the PIN pads at the register when making purchases.

Our point-of-sale system also utilizes an online payment feature through www.myschoolbucks.com. The Seneca Valley School District is pleased to provide a cafeteria payment service over the internet. There is no fee to use the myschoolbucks service to setup an account and view your child's meal purchases, balances, and to set up automated email notices when your child's meal account falls below a dollar amount you specify. Online payments can be made, but are subject to a small convenience fee, with the funds being deposited into the student's account within 24 hours.

Payments can also be made via check or cash. Please place check/cash in an envelope with the student's name, grade, and ID number written on it. This will allow the cashier to find your student and deposit the money into the correct account. When paying via check, please make the check out to **SVSD Food Service**. Unfortunately, our system does not support credit card payments outside of online deposits via MySchoolBucks.

Students are welcome to purchase any item available in the cafeteria with the funds available in their accounts. Parents do have the ability to put restrictions on their student's account. Please reach out to the cafeteria via email to request any account restrictions.

Free and reduced lunch applications may be picked up in the school office, printed from the Seneca Valley School District website, or applied for online by going to the COMPASS website at <https://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov>. COMPASS allows Pennsylvanians to apply for social service programs online. If your family is eligible for Free/Reduced meals, an application must be completed each year and on file prior to meals being purchased.

Students will never be left without a meal, regardless of the circumstances. If a student forgets their packed lunch at home, or simply doesn't have money on their lunch account, they will still be provided a lunch unless their parents/guardians have indicated otherwise. Students are permitted to charge meals (breakfast and lunch) to their accounts if they don't have enough money to pay for that day's meal. However, students are not permitted to charge a la carte items to their accounts - chips, cookies, extra meals, etc. Emails are distributed weekly to the parent/guardian email(s) to notify them of low/negative lunch account balances. For more information, contact Ms. Tammy Tappe, Cafeteria Manager, at 724-538-8800, ext. 7055. **Thank you for the opportunity to feed your student each day!**

For more detailed information about the District's Meal Account Policies, please refer to Board Policy #809 or the district Food Services Policy #808, which are located under the School Board tab on our website under "School Board Policies".

To ensure that all students are safe, cafeteria rules will be strictly enforced. These rules require our students to:

- Arrive at cafeteria on time and in an orderly way.
- Line up in a single file line.
- Remain in your original seat at all times.
- Be responsible for cleaning up your area.
- Request permission to use the restroom.
- Remain seated until the lunch monitors dismiss your table.

- Do not solicit for funds or sell food or candy during the school day.
- Do not bring open cans or bottles of soda into the cafeteria; cans or bottles must be discarded before leaving the cafeteria.
- Celebratory food and/or large quantities of food to be shared is not permitted to be brought in by students or dropped off by parents.
- Food offered during classroom celebrations should be consistent with the district Allergy and Health and Wellness policies. All food items must be pre-approved.

Transportation



Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right. To ensure the safety and well-being of all passengers, students are expected to demonstrate respectful and responsible behavior at all times.

- Safety First: Unsafe behavior will not be tolerated. Be courteous to others and follow bus rules.
- Prohibited Items: Eating, drinking, and the use of tobacco or vaping products are strictly forbidden on the bus.
- Seating Assignments: School administration and bus drivers may assign seats.
- Misconduct: Students who engage in inappropriate behavior may lose their bus privileges. Suspension from the bus does not excuse a student from attending school.
- Arrival Time: Students should arrive at their designated bus stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time.

- **Emergencies:** For bus related emergencies before 8:00 AM or after 4:00 PM, please contact First Student. (724)-248-1530.

Temporary Transportation Changes

In accordance with School Board Policy 810, transportation will not be provided for personal activities such as:

- Employment
- Music or dance lessons
- Gymnastics
- Visiting friends
- Attending events where a parent is unable to provide transportation

Approved exceptions include:

- A death in the family
- Hospitalization of an immediate family member
- Temporary guardianship due to a parent/guardian's absence

To request a temporary change, contact the Transportation Department at 724-452-6040

- No additional uses, stops, or route changes will be made for individual requests.
- Approval is subject to space availability on the requested bus

Alternative Stop Requests

Parents/guardians may request an alternative stop for the following reasons:

- Shared custody arrangements
- Daycare needs before or after school

Important Guidelines:

- Only one alternative stop may be requested
- The schedule must be consistent each week (e.g., no alternating Fridays).
- All alternative stops are reset annually. A new request must be submitted each school year.

- The deadline for submitting alternative stop requests for the 2026-2027 school year is July 17, 2026.
- No requests will be accepted during the first few weeks of school. Late requests will be processed starting Sept. 15th, and families will be responsible for transportation until then.

Bus Behavior Expectations

Bus behavior should reflect the same standards as classroom conduct. The bus driver has the authority to enforce rules and maintain order.

Student Responsibilities:

- Arrive at the bus stop 5 minutes early.
- Wait safely away from the road. No pushing, shoving, or horseplay.
- Board the bus calmly and go directly to your assigned seat.
- Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
- Speak quietly and respectfully. Loud or disruptive behavior is not allowed.
- Keep all body parts inside the bus. Ask permission before opening windows.
- Do not eat, drink, or throw objects on or from the bus.
- Exit the bus in an orderly manner and proceed directly to your destination.

Disciplinary Actions

- Drivers will document misconduct using bus conduct forms, which are reviewed by school administrators.
- Students are expected to comply with all driver instructions to maintain a safe environment.

Audio and Video Monitoring

The School Board has adopted a policy that authorizes audio and/or visual recording on school buses or school vehicles for safety, disciplinary, or security purposes. The audio/video recordings on school vehicles would be exempt from disclosure under the Public Right to Know Law because such recordings constitute an educational record protected from disclosure by FERPA. Principals, their designees, bus garage managers, and transportation department personnel are the only people allowed to view the recordings. Law enforcement may also view the recordings if school officials deem necessary. Each school bus or school vehicle with audio and/or visual recording devices will post a notification in clear sight so driver and passengers understand their actions and communication may be recorded. The audio and or video recording will not be operating if the vehicle is used for other purposes not school related.

Custody Agreements or Daycare (Alternate Stops)

Parents sharing equal custody of a child or parents needing daycare before and/or after school may need an alternative stop location. However, only one alternative stop location can be requested. An alternative stop is only set up in case of a custody agreement or daycare.

Parents and/or guardians need to alert the Transportation Department of an alternate address if needed. Requests for “**Alternate Stops**” to transportation can be made by accessing “Transportation Requests” on the Transportation Department website www.svsd.net. **Click on departments and from the drop down menu, click on Transportation.** The links to transportation requests will be on the left of the web page.

The days for an alternative stop need to be consistent and a regular schedule. A regular schedule consists of specific days and is consistent each week of the school year. No alternating Fridays will be accepted. All alternative stops will be deleted at the end of the school year and parents will need to submit a request for an alternative stop before the beginning of the following school year.

Processing requests may take three to five business days. The district will not add additional buses or loading zones (bus stops) or alter established routes to accommodate an individual transportation request. Any change is dependent upon the availability of space on the alternative bus. Requests for alternative stops will not be taken during the first few weeks of school. Parents missing the deadline will be responsible for transportation.

Lost Items on the Bus

It is best to contact the bus garage immediately when an item is missing. The garage managers can call the driver to confirm if the lost item is on the bus. Please have the bus number available before calling the garage. 724-248-1530

Bus Behavior

Proper behavior is an absolute necessity while riding on the school bus. The bus driver has the authority to enforce discipline on the school bus as the teacher has in the classroom. Student behavior on the bus should be an extension of their classroom behavior. Student responsibilities are as follows:

- Arrive at the bus stop five minutes early.
- Wait safely away from the road. No pushing, shoving, or horseplay.
- Board the bus calmly and go directly to your assigned seat.
- Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
- Speak quietly and respectfully. Loud or disruptive behavior is not allowed.
- Keep all body parts inside the bus.
- Ask permission before opening windows.
- Do not eat, drink, or throw objects on or from the bus.
- Exit the bus in an orderly manner and proceed directly to your destination.

- **Disciplinary Actions:**
- Drivers will document misconduct using bus conduct forms, which are reviewed by school administrators.
- Students are expected to comply with all driver instructions to maintain a safe environment.

Reporting Concerns

- For student behavior issues, contact your child's school administrator.
- For concerns about the bus vehicle or driver, contact the Transportation Department at 724-452-6040 ext. 1758.

The primary reason for bus rules is student safety. Therefore, all requests from a bus driver to change your behavior must be obeyed. Drivers will document inappropriate bus behavior using bus conduct forms which will be sent to building administrators.

Closed Campus

To ensure the safety of our students, Seneca Valley School District maintains a closed campus environment. All building exterior entrance doors, including those doors at the main lobby, will be locked from the outside during school hours. Students must remain in areas assigned to them in their schedules. No student is permitted to be in the school building unsupervised or unauthorized; this includes after school hours for forgotten and/or lost items.

- All visitors to the building must immediately report to the main office. Violation of this policy is a serious offense which may require the assistance of local law enforcement agencies.

Educational Trip Forms

The Seneca Valley School District recognizes that students may have the opportunity to participate in pre-planned trips and educational experiences during the regular school year. A written request (Seneca Valley Pre-Approved Educational Request Form) must be received at least two weeks prior to the actual trip. Pre-approval forms are available in the school office or at www.svsd.net under the heading Our District, Parents/Community, Forms, Student Forms, Educational Trip Form Elem Cover Letter - Information - Application. The determination of each request will be based on the following: prior attendance records; current grades; previous requests; frequency of such requests; and the educational value of the experience.

Seneca Valley School District will NOT approve absences for educational tours or trips during the first two weeks or the final two weeks of the school year, nor during PSSA and Keystone testing. It is the student's responsibility to obtain all classroom assignments before he or she departs for their trip. It is further understood that all classroom assignments are due the day the student returns from the trip.

Field Trips

If certain activities require additional absences from regularly scheduled classes, a student with excessive absences will not be permitted to attend school sponsored field trips or activities. A specific dress code may be required for participation on the field trip. School dress code always applies.

Fire Drills

Fire exits have been posted throughout the building. When the fire alarm is sounded, students should follow the signs. When out of the building, keep moving to an area designated by your teacher. Return to your classroom when directed by the teacher or principal.

Media Release

As part of an on-going process to generate good news about our schools, the Seneca Valley School District often invites the media inside the classroom to learn about our outstanding academic programs and events.

If you do not want to appear in either a photograph or to be interviewed for a story, parents should provide written notification to the building principal.

CIRC

The Seneca Valley CIRC (Creativity, Innovation & Research Center) spaces offer students an opportunity to use a "constructivist approach to all sorts of project-based activities" per Dr. Marie Polano, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary. In this immersive space, young inventors can be found learning and collaborating on subjects such as coding, robotics, engineering, communications, and graphic design. They are also experiencing self-discovery, learning problem-solving skills, and taking home real-world knowledge.

Library now falls under CIRC and is not a weekly class; instead, the library is a resource classroom for all. Students will be scheduled in the library by class for research skills instruction and to choose novels. At the card catalog's website, <http://destiny.svsd.net>, students can access the card catalog, e-books, digital databases, and other resources.

Students may visit the library at any time with permission from their classroom teacher. In order to use the internet, the school's computer policy must be followed exactly.

Students are responsible for returning the library books by the due date. Should a book not be returned by the end of the school year, students will be required to replace the book at its cost. It is our goal in the ECMS Library to meet the information and curriculum needs of our students and faculty.

Morning Arrival

Students arriving between 8:40 and 8:55 a.m. must report directly to their lockers and homerooms. On days when teachers have their PLC meetings, students are to sit down by their lockers and quietly wait until the meetings end at 8:50.

Rest Rooms

It is recommended you use the restrooms prior to the start of the school day and prior to dismissal. With adult permission, you may use the restroom between class periods, during lunch periods, and when you have signed out from the classroom.

You are expected to keep them clean! If you are feeling ill, report to the nurse's office; do not remain in the rest rooms. Students are to refrain from asking for a rest room pass during class time except for emergencies. If this is necessary, make sure to follow the classroom sign out procedure in each classroom.

Sale or Transactions

The selling or purchasing of items in school between students is not permitted without permission from the principal.

Obligations

Students are responsible for the satisfactory settlement of costs for lost or damaged books and other school property, unpaid fees, school equipment not returned, etc. A student who has incurred this type of debt must satisfy all obligations at the end of each grading period.

The McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act

This act can help provide school stability for children if you do not have a permanent home and are:

- Staying with friends or family because you lost housing
- Living in a shelter, including transitional programs
- Staying in motels because you cannot get your own home
- Living on streets, in a car, van, tent, or other non-permanent structure

If you need assistance or have questions please contact the school counselor or the district homeless liaison, Dr. Cassandra Doggrell, Director of Student Services at (724) 452- 6040, ext. 1750.

Therapy Dogs

There are numerous educational benefits for trained therapy dogs to support education. A human handler always accompanies therapy dogs. Periodically, therapy dogs will visit school buildings to support learning. If you have concerns about therapy dogs relating to your child(ren), please contact the school office.

STUDENTS RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

School Code 510 PA Code (Title 22) 12.1

Above and beyond these general responsibilities, students have specific rights and responsibilities in the following areas:

Religion:

Right: The school may not interfere with your right to observe any religion (or none at all if you wish) by requiring or conducting religious exercises for you.

Responsibility: Each person has his/her own personal beliefs; you have the responsibility to respect the religious beliefs and observances of others.

Speech and Expression:

Right: You have the right to express your views, either orally or symbolically.

Responsibility: When expressing yourself, you must do so in a manner that does not materially or substantially disrupt the instructional environment. You may not, in expressing yourself, violate another person's rights by using slanderous speech or expressions.

Flag Salute and Pledge of Allegiance:

Right: You may not be forced to take part in the salute of the flag or pledge of allegiance if doing so violates your beliefs or values.

Responsibility: If you refuse to participate in the salute to the flag or pledge of allegiance, you may not disrupt the activity of others who choose to do so.

Suspension and Expulsion:

Right: Before you may be suspended from school for ten days or less, the suspending school official will:

- a) Tell you what rule you have broken;
- b) Explain to you why he/she believes it;
- c) Give you a chance to tell your version of what happened.

Responsibility: You have the responsibility to follow school regulations. You are not shielded from suspension 'properly imposed' according to the above procedures. In such cases a hearing in which the above rules are followed should be given as soon as practical after you are suspended.

Racial Discrimination and Segregated Schools:

Right: The state, or any other governmental body, may not establish racially segregated schools, thus depriving you of your right to an education regardless of race. Also, every student has the right to an education without any interference. Any acts of hatred toward the race, color, religion, or natural origin of another individual or group of individuals can disrupt the educational atmosphere.

Responsibility: To hold respect, understanding, and appreciation of each person's worth and individuality, regardless of race.

Sexual Harassment:

Right: Every student has the right to an education without any interference. This defines an educational atmosphere free from unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other inappropriate verbal, written or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Responsibility: To respect and appreciate each person's worth and individuality regardless of gender or age.

**Abuse (Physical, Emotional, Neglect, etc.):**

All employees of the Seneca Valley School District are identified as Mandated Reporters of child abuse. This means that if abuse of any kind is suspected of occurring to a child in our care, it must be reported to the appropriate authority. Reports of abuse can be made by the student involved or anyone who suspects that abuse is occurring. Staff members who become aware of, or suspect an abusive situation are required to report the suspected abuse to Childline (1-800-932-0313).

Withdrawal and Transfer

If you are moving to another area or permanently withdrawing from school, you must first officially notify Mrs. Ruppert in the ECMS office at rupperthl@svsd.net or 724-538-8800 and sign a withdrawal form. All parents / guardians of students leaving the district must complete an exit survey.

Discipline

Student Discipline

The Seneca Valley School District has adopted a district-wide unified discipline code. We encourage all students to familiarize themselves with this policy, so that an effective and consistent learning environment may be created and maintained in every classroom and throughout our school.

Discipline policies and procedures aim to protect and nurture the physical, social, intellectual, and emotional health and growth of our students and staff. In addition, these regulations specifically limit the opportunity of any individual to interrupt another student's educational growth.

These policies and procedures recognize:

- The inherent dignity and rights of each individual;
- Our society's devotion to humanitarian ideals and loyalty to the principles of freedom, justice, and equality;
- The need for direction and encouragement in developing a sense of responsibility for one's actions and decisions; and
- That one often must subjugate one's personal inclinations, whims, and comforts to achieve the greater goals of the school and society.



The following principles are guiding points that school personnel follow in the enforcement of these policies and procedures.

1. All students have worth and dignity! Our school strives to use positive ways of guidance which help communicate belief in self-worth and recognize student needs in relation to their personal growth and histories.
2. Students must understand the reasons for discipline policies and procedures and to foresee the consequences of their behavior and actions.
3. All policies and procedures must be consistently enforced to maintain an attitude of fairness for all students.
4. All students have the right to receive their education in an appropriate learning environment and violations of that right by other students will not be tolerated. Students exhibiting disruptive behavior may be removed from a class with a failing grade for repeatedly destroying another's opportunity to learn.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is defined as taking or imitating the ideas, thoughts, or language of another to represent them as one's original work. It is imperative that all work submitted by the student be representative of his/her own ideas, thoughts, and especially language capability. Therefore, plagiarism is strictly prohibited in all work pertaining to school. If the ideas, thoughts, or language from another source must be used in academic work, it is the student's responsibility to cite or annotate the information appropriately.

Academic dishonesty is not limited to plagiarism. This includes cheating on tests, quizzes, or homework, as well as the electronic transfer of academic material from one student to another and taking any curriculum or testing materials from a classroom.

Teachers will determine the academic consequence. Upon administrative investigation, additional consequences may be enacted.

Classroom Disruptions

When a student is removed from class for a disruption, he or she must report directly to the principal's office as dictated by the offense.

Discipline Notification

If disciplinary consequences are issued to a student, an attempt will be made to notify the parents / guardians.

Fighting

Fighting is NOT permitted at any time! Violators will be subject to disciplinary action and/or criminal penalties.

Discipline Records

Records and verified reports of students involved in recurrent or serious infractions will be maintained beyond the end of the school year. These records may be referenced and included in determining future disciplinary actions for a student.

Late Arrivals to Class

A student is considered tardy if he or she is not in their assigned seat when the class begins at 8:55. All tardy students must go through the main office and provide a note as to why they are late.

Public Show of Affection

There is to be absolutely NO public show of affection in the school, on school grounds, or on school buses. Violators will receive disciplinary action.

In School Suspension

Students who are suspended may, at the discretion of the administration, be assigned to In-School Suspension. This is a time when supervised schoolwork will be done. Failure to do assigned work will result in further disciplinary action.

Parents will be notified of all suspension(s) and, should it become necessary, a parent conference will be requested. In-School Suspended students will not be permitted to participate in after-school activities. This includes dances, plays, and athletics.

Policies

Bullying (as per Policy # 249)

Seneca Valley School Board is committed to providing all students and employees with a safe and civil educational environment, free from threat, harassment, or bullying. Any student that feels as though they have been bullied shall report the incident immediately to their teacher, guidance counselor, or principal. Bullying and safety concerns can also be reported using Sprigeo.com.

As per Board Policy, bullying is defined as an intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or series of acts, directed at another student or students; which occurs in or relates to a school setting; that is severe, persistent, or pervasive; and that has the effect of doing any of the following:

- Substantially interfering with a student's education
- Creating a threatening environment
- Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of school
- Roughhousing is among friends, the power between them is equal, and it is not meant to harm. Bullying and/or fighting is not among friends, the power between them is imbalanced, and it is meant to harm. For more detailed information about Seneca Valley's Anti-Bullying Policies, please see school board policy #249.

Cafeteria (per Policy #246, #808,#809)
Seneca Valley School District recognizes that student wellness and proper nutrition are related to students' physical well-being, growth, development, and readiness to learn. The Board is committed to providing a school environment that promotes student wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning experience. In a healthy school environment, students will learn about and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices that can improve student achievement. The district's Wellness Policy complies with the Pennsylvania School Nutritional and Food Standards. You may find this policy in its entirety on our website under School Board Policies.

Dangerous Items / Weapons (as per Policy # 218.1)

NO student is permitted to have in their locker, on their person, on school property, or on school buses any item which may endanger their or other students' safety: i.e., knives, blasting caps, live ammo, firearms, contraband, or exploding devices of any kind (firecrackers, smoke bombs, and other similar objects).

Possession or use of these items, including 'look alikes', will result in severe disciplinary action including possible expulsion, and/or referral to the appropriate law enforcement agencies in accordance with School District Policy 218 and Act 26, the Gun Free School Act.

Dress Code (as per Policy # 221)

The School Board recognizes that each student's mode of dress and grooming is a manifestation of personal style and individual preference. The updated dress code aims to provide a consistent standard for all students. The policy also encourages students to project themselves to other students, staff, and visiting guests in a manner that honors the atmosphere of learning in a school environment.

The following are the important points within the updated policy, specific to **inappropriate items** for the school day, which include but are not exclusive of, the following:

1. Clothing, apparel, or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures, or any other combinations thereof, advocates or promotes sexual activity, violence, death, suicide, or the use of alcohol or drugs; or demeans, degrades, or intimidates another because of race, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, religious persuasions, national origin or disability.
2. Students are required to avoid clothing that excessively exposes the chest or buttocks when standing, sitting, or moving. Undergarments may not be exposed. Items of clothing cannot mimic the appearance, style, or coverage of undergarments.
3. Any clothing that is of transparent material, see-through material, or has sexually suggestive signs, symbols, or phrases.

In addition:

4. Footwear must be worn at all times.
5. JROTC uniforms are considered standardized dress on designated days.
6. Activity-specific dress such as cheerleading uniforms or other athletic uniforms are only permitted on days designated as school spirit days by the building principal or his/her designee.
7. Where hats are permitted (see Frequently Asked Question #5 below), they must be worn to allow the face to be visible to staff and not interfere with the line of sight of any student or staff. Hoodies will be worn down so that the face and ears will be visible to school staff.

The policy describes the district's minimum dress code requirements. As we move into the 2025-2026 school year, we believe that these changes will foster a respectful and consistent environment for all students. Thank you for your cooperation and support as we implement these adjustments.

Dress Code Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. Can I wear a shirt with spaghetti/tank straps?

Spaghetti/tank top straps tops are permissible so long as they do not excessively expose chest, expose undergarments or mimic the coverage of undergarments.

2. Can my bandeau be exposed, or may I wear a tube top?

No, no undergarments may be exposed; tube tops on their own are not permissible.

3. Can I have holes in my jeans?

Holes in jeans are permissible so long as they do not expose buttocks when standing, sitting, or moving. Undergarments may not be exposed.

4. Can I show any midriff?

Some midriff is permissible so long as the top does not mimic the appearance, style or coverage of undergarments. Furthermore, so long as the top does not excessively expose chest while standing, sitting, or moving.

5. Can hats be worn in all grades?

Hats are permitted in grades 9-12; they are not permitted in grades K-8.

What will the consequences look like for dress code violations?

a. Disciplinary actions will be as follows:

i. First Offense: Warning and documented

ii. Second Offense: Required to change, student phone taken as collateral if borrowing clothing, call home and documented

iii. Third Offense: After school detention assigned, required to change, phone taken as collateral if borrowing clothing, call home and documented

iv. All subsequent offenses: Progressive discipline

Electronic Devices and BYOT (as per Policy # 237)

School District Policy permits the use of personal technology resources during class time for **educational use only and with teacher permission.**

Devices can also be used during extracurricular time for educational use only and with teacher permission. Students must also be aware of and adhere to the following guidelines:

- The use of social media is strictly prohibited for non-educational use.
- For accountability, students must register their personal devices at <http://byot.svsd.net> before connecting to the school's wireless connection. For internet connectivity, students must connect their personal devices to the school's wireless connection. This Wi-Fi connection allows for filtered internet access only, which is provided at no cost and does not use cellular data plan minutes.
- Students are strictly prohibited from using a personal data plan to access the internet throughout the day. A student is solely responsible for all charges incurred by usage at that time.
- Student participation in BYOT is a privilege which can be revoked for irresponsible use.
- Cell phones must be stored in homeroom chart pockets and remain there unless directed otherwise by a teacher.
- For more information and a complete set of guidelines, please visit the SVSD website <http://www.svsd.net/byot> and/or refer to Policy # 237.

Students are not permitted to use personal devices to contact home. If you are not feeling well, visit the nurse. In any other circumstance (forgot homework, lunch, etc.) students may request to use the phone in the main office.

Responsible Use of Technology Resources - Update to SV Policy #237

Seneca Valley welcomes and encourages students and staff to utilize technology as a supplemental resource for learning (*when appropriate and in a positive manner*). However, it has become evident that use of cell phones and other personal electronic communication devices have become more of a deterrent to the overall successful engagement of academics while in school.

The natural next step is to act on student use of cell phone/personal electronic device during the school day. Therefore, the School Board approved a policy (Policy #237) updated recently regarding device use while in school, starting with the 25-26 school year.

Student smartphones or other personal electronic communication devices ("devices") may come to school, but **must** be stowed on their person and out of sight or stored in a locker or backpack. The use of any electronic device is strictly prohibited in bathrooms and locker rooms. The following are building-level rules:

- For grades K-6, devices or smart watches may not be used in the cafeteria during lunch, in the hallways, or other non-instructional areas.
- For extracurricular activities, device use is discouraged, but will be left to the discretion of the coach or sponsor.

Consequences for violating the above expectations:

- First offense: Devices will be sent to the main office for student to pick up at the end of the school day. The parent/guardian will be notified.
- Second offense: Devices will be sent to the main office for student to pick up at the end of the school day. The parent/guardian will be notified. Additionally, students will be seen in the main office to review the policy and will lose their device for one school day.
- Third offense: Parent/Guardian will be required to pick up the device from the main office.

- Additional discipline may be assigned and can result in consequences which range from detention to in-school suspension at the secondary (grades 7-12) level, and lunch detention to in-school suspension at the elementary (grades K-6) level.
- Each subsequent offense or refusal to surrender personal device: This will result in parent pick up of the device and a review of the policy with the student. Progressive discipline will take place at this level and depend on the scope and number of policy violations.

Harassment / Racial and Ethnic Intimidation

(as per Policy # 248 & 248.1)

Seneca Valley School District has a policy regarding harassment and intimidation of any type including sexual harassment and ethnic intimidation. These will not be tolerated and will be addressed in strict compliance with the school disciplinary code.

Please also be aware that ethnic intimidation is illegal and is in violation of the Ethnic Intimidation and Institutional Vandalism Act of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code. These crimes are more serious when motivated by hatred toward the race, color, religion, or national origin of another individual or group of individuals. Vandalism causing this type of damage to a school or educational facility or personal property located within such places is an offense punishable as a felony.

Therefore, any person who is injured or whose property is damaged by such actions can sue for emotional distress, punitive damages, and attorney fees and costs. All confirmed incidents of racial or ethnic intimidation will result in immediate police notification.

Please notify us of any change in emergency contact, your phone number or work number, and update your emergency contacts in the SV Parent Portal.

Homebound Instruction

If a student is seriously ill or unable to attend school for an extended period of time, the doctor may complete the necessary form so that the student can receive homebound instruction. The proper forms can be obtained by contacting Dr. Marie Polano at (724) 452-6040.

Immunization Policy:

Any child entering school in the District for the first time must have a valid exemption or documented immunization.

1. Proof of immunization, rather than a parent's recall, is required. Immunization must be completed before the child may enter the school.
2. Any child excluded from school shall be re-entered only after satisfactory proof of action is presented to the school.
3. There must be a physician's certificate or statement that the student is medically contraindicated to receive a specified vaccine or a parent's/guardian's written statement that immunization is against their religious beliefs.
4. Children entering school, kindergarten through fourth grade, must meet the following immunization requirements:
 - Four (4) doses of tetanus and diphtheria vaccine; the fourth dose must be given after the 4th birthday.
 - Four (4) doses of polio vaccine; the fourth dose must be given after the 4th birthday and at least 6 months after the 3rd dose.
 - Two (2) doses of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine.
 - Three (3) doses of hepatitis B vaccine.
 - Two (2) doses of varicella vaccine or evidence of disease or blood titer.

Students needing immunized can do so at a local health care provider or the Butler County Immunization Clinic.

Butler County - Immunization Clinics

Butler County State Health Center
Monarch Building
100 Burgh Avenue, Suite 201
Butler, PA 16001

Clinics are on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please call for an appointment: 724-287-1769

Medications:

The Seneca Valley School District recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility for the health of their children. The district, therefore, strongly recommends that medication be given at home. Towards this end, parents should confer with the child's physician to arrange medication time intervals which avoid school hours whenever possible. If, however, medication absolutely must be given during school hours, the following guidelines and procedures must be followed.

Prescriptions:

1. The student's physician must complete the District's approved prescription medication form for medication.
2. The student's parents or guardian must sign the District's consent form for prescription medications.
3. Any medication to be given during school hours must be brought to school in the original pharmaceutically dispensed and properly labeled container, preferably by the parent.

Responsible Use of Technology Resources

(as per Policy # 237)

If medications must be sent in with a student, the student must report directly to the nurse's office from home to deliver the medication. Parents must notify the nurse that the medication is being sent with the student, and, if necessary, how many pills have been sent.

Non-Prescription or Over-the-Counter Medications:

1. Students are not permitted to carry non-prescription medications to or from school.
2. There has been a slight change in our medication policy. In order to better serve our students, our school nurses may now administer over-the-counter pain medications, acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) and ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin, Advil) to students who have their parent's written permission. The school physician has written orders for these two medications to be given as needed to students to treat mild pain and discomfort - such as minor headaches, orthodontic pain, or menstrual cramps. Students WILL NOT be given pain medication to reduce a fever.
3. Dosage for these medications will be determined by the student's weight, and dosages that exceed the recommended dose will NOT be given without a special order from the student's personal physician.

Note: All medications, prescription, non-prescription, and over-the-counter, must be picked up by parents/ guardians at the end of the school year; if not, they will be discarded.

Seneca Valley welcomes and encourages students and staff to utilize technology as a supplemental resource for learning (when appropriate and in a positive manner).

However, it has become evident that use of cell phones and other personal electronic communication devices have become more of a deterrent to the overall successful engagement of academics while in school.

The natural next step is to act on student use of cell phone/personal electronic device during the school day.

Therefore, the School Board approved a policy (Policy #237). Beginning with the 2025–26 school year, all K–12 students will be required to store their phones away during the school day (from the first bell to the last), making our schools phone-free for all students.

Consequences for violating the above expectations:

- **First offense** – Devices will be sent to the main office for student to pick up at the end of the school day. The parent/guardian will be notified.
- **Second offense** - Devices will be sent to the main office for student to pick up at the end of the school day. The parent/guardian will be notified. Additionally, students will be seen in the main office to review the policy and will lose their device for one school day.
- **Third offense** – Parent/Guardian will be required to pick up the device from the main office. Additional discipline may be assigned and can result in consequences which range from detention to in-school suspension at the secondary (grades 7-12) level, and lunch detention to in-school suspension at the elementary (grades K-6) level.

- Each subsequent offense or refusal to surrender personal device – This will result in parent pick up of the device and a review of the policy with the student. Progressive discipline will take place at this level and depend on the scope and number of policy violations.

Lockers and Personal Property (as per Policy # 224 and # 226)

A locker will be assigned to you at the beginning of the school year for your personal items and books. Please use only the locker assigned to you. The school will not assume responsibility for articles that are taken from any lockers.

Please be aware that the lockers are the property of the Seneca Valley School District and are provided to you for storing school related items and clothing. The school has an obligation to ensure that all lockers are properly used and that no item placed in the lockers jeopardizes the health, safety and welfare of our students, faculty, school property or the educational process.

To fulfill this obligation, school officials are empowered to conduct reasonable searches of a particular student and their personal property (including backpacks, purses, gym bags, etc.) and school property where reasonable suspicion exists that the student may be in possession of drugs, weapons alcohol or other materials in violation of school policy or state law or any materials that pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of that student or other students.

In case of emergency, blanket searches may be made. The district reserves the right to conduct periodic searches employing drug or bomb sniffing dogs.

Amendments to the handbook: It is possible that after the printing of this handbook, corrections or changes may be made. Students will be advised of additions or deletions. The most current version is available on our website.

Computer Use/Technology

Student Lenova Laptop Rules and Regulations

The Lenova devices are a privilege provided for the students to enhance the academic curriculum.

Games that are not specifically used in the curriculum are not allowed on the system. Individual files are not considered to be personal property.

These files may be accessed at any time by teachers, administrators, or the system manager. Students are not permitted access to other students' files.

Tampering with files, copying of copyrighted software, downloading or installing games, password tampering, accessing unauthorized directories, or removing equipment or software will be considered theft.

Tampering with any hardware or equipment or violating policies and/ or guidelines governing the use of networks, Internet, or software programs are also considered offenses and will be dealt with per Seneca Valley Policy # 218.

Violators may also be prosecuted under applicable local, state, or federal civil or criminal law. Acceptable use policy is available online.

Clubs

Ehrman Crest Middle School has a school activity program for interested students.

The type of activities offered varies, depending on student interest and availability of sponsors. School activities meet on designated days during the activity period.

Guidelines for Student Activities

- 1) All student activities held in the name of the school must be approved by the administration and chaperoned by faculty members or approved chaperones.
- 2) All student activities shall be held in the school building or on the school grounds unless otherwise approved by the administration.
3. Students in attendance are liable for the care of the facilities.
4. Guests are not permitted to attend unless approved by the school administration.
5. All school policies including those relating to drugs and alcohol are in effect at all school activities.