

HIGHLANDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"Every student matters, every moment counts."

Student/Family Handbook 2026-2027

RAMS



**101 E Ninth Avenue
Tarentum, PA 15084**

Phone: 724.226.2400

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year at Highlands Elementary School! We are excited to begin a new journey together as we embrace this year's theme: *Cleared for Takeoff: Charting Our Course for Success*.

Inspired by the book *I Am Amelia Earhart*, our students will explore perseverance, courage, and goal setting. We want students to dream big, set meaningful goals, and take pride in the journey it takes to reach them. Along the way, they will make connections to future careers and real-world readiness.

At HES, every child is full of potential and ready to soar. We are committed to helping students grow academically, socially, and emotionally as they learn more about themselves, their goals, and their role in our school community.

RAMS Expectations

Every student and staff member is expected to model our core values each day:

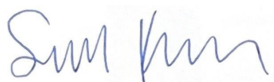
- **R – Respectful:** Treating ourselves, others, and our environment with care
- **A – Accountable:** Taking responsibility for our actions and staying on course
- **M – Motivated:** Showing effort, curiosity, and determination
- **S – Safe:** Making choices that protect ourselves and others

These expectations guide everything we do—from classrooms to recess to bus rides—and help create a positive, supportive school environment.

Daily attendance is essential for student success, as being present and engaged helps students build routines, relationships, and the skills needed to reach their goals. Please make attendance a priority and communicate with the office when absences are necessary.

We value our partnership with you and appreciate your support. Please review the complete handbook for important information about school procedures, expectations, and communication tools. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to a fantastic year together!

Sincerely,



Ms. Sarah Kumar, Principal
skumar@goldenrams.com



Mr. TJ Trozzi, Assistant Principal
atrozzi@goldenrams.com

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students and parents with information regarding the academic and behavioral expectations for Highlands Elementary School. Upon review of this information with your child, please **sign below and return it by the end of the week** to your child's teacher. Please use this handbook as a reference during the year.

HIGHLANDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Handbook and School-Parent Compact

I, _____ have read and I understand this student handbook for my
(Parent/Guardian Name-Please Print)

Student, _____. I have clarified any questions with the teacher or
(Student Name-Please Print)

Building principal.

Parent Signature

Date

***** Due Friday, September 4, 2026 *****

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HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Highlands School District is to create a quality, caring educational environment and to develop academic, vocational, and social programs that will enable students to achieve their highest potential in personal growth; and that the family, the community, business, and industry will share in the responsibility to prepare students to function as effective citizens in an ever-changing global community.

THE HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY

The Highlands School District comprises the municipalities of Fawn Township, Harrison Township, Brackenridge Borough, and Tarentum Borough. This area is approximately twenty-two square miles with a population of about 25,000. It is located in the northeast corner of Allegheny County along the Allegheny River, about 18 miles from Pittsburgh. The Route 28 Expressway provides easy access to the Greater Pittsburgh area. The immediate area is home to major industries, including three primary research and development facilities. The four communities offer a mixture of urban and rural residential areas, and a variety of recreational, educational, shopping, and health care facilities. Residents are within commuting distance of central Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania colleges and universities, as well as a wide selection of business and technical schools.

ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS

The Highlands School District comprises four school buildings and the Administrative Center. The Highlands High School houses students in grades 9 through 12; the Middle School houses students in grades 5 through 8; Highlands Elementary School houses students in grades 1 through 4; and the Highlands Early Childhood Center houses students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Total district enrollment is approximately 2,100 students.

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Monique Mawhinney	Superintendent
TBD	Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Paul Paradise	Director of Business Affairs
Dr. Rebecca Bragan	Federal Programs and State Assessment Coordinator
Mrs. Kristie Gizienski	Supervisor of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment K-4
Dr. Amber Dean	Student Services Director
Dr. Michele Welter	Coordinator of Student Services
Dr. Angela Kennedy	School Psychologist
Dr. Rebecca Keenan	School Psychologist
Dr. Stanley Whiteman	Director of Building and Grounds
Ms. Stacey Waffensmith	Food Services Director
Ms. Katie Jo Stobert	Athletics & Transportation Director
Mrs. Jennifer Goldberg	Communication Coordinator
Mr. Lee McIntire	School Police Officer
Ms. Sharon Foley	School Police Officer
Mr. Steve Guelich	School Police Officer
Mrs. Diane Faix	PIMS/SIS Data Analyst
Mrs. Carmen Corna	School District Attendance Officer
Mr. James Rounce	Director of Technology

DISTRICT GOALS

Re-Framing the Future

Academic achievement is a priority for all students. The Highlands School District and board of directors established the following goals for the 2024-2028 school years that connect to student achievement.

1. Student Achievement and Growth
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Operational Efficiency
4. Safety and Security
5. Collaborative Community and Culture



SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACT 2026-2027

Highlands Elementary School and the parents of the students participating in activities, services, and programs funded by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) agree that this compact outlines how the parents, the entire school staff, and the students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement, and how the school and parents will build and develop a partnership that will help children achieve the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards.

This school-parent compact is in effect during the school year 2026-2027.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Highlands Elementary School will:

- 1. Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables students to meet the state's student academic achievement standards as follows:**
 - Provide engaging and motivating learning experiences through educational best practices and research-based strategies.
 - Set high academic and classroom expectations.
 - Promote collaboration between staff, administration, parents, and community stakeholders.
 - Provide clear explanations of academic and classroom expectations to both students and parents.
 - Use differentiated instruction and research-based interventions through progress monitoring and data collection.
 - Encourage lifelong learning through parent involvement activities.
 - Emphasize the respect and uniqueness of students and families.
 - Enable students to become responsible citizens by providing opportunities for success.
- 2. Hold parent-teacher conferences (at least annually in elementary schools) during which this compact will be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement.**
 - Parent conferences will be held yearly in November.
- 3. Provide parents with frequent reports on their children's progress.**

Specifically, the school will provide reports as follows:

 - Title I teachers will prepare and send reports 3/x a year (beginning, middle, end).
 - PSSA score reports will be mailed home to parents.
 - Firefly and Acadience Assessments (Computer-based program that measures academic progress), and Progress Reports will be given to parents before Parent-Teacher Conferences.
 - Classroom teachers will send quarterly interim progress reports and quarterly report cards.
 - Parents of students moving into Tier III of the MTSS model will be invited to an MTSS Action Plan Meeting.
 - Provide *PowerSchool* information to check student grades, attendance, and/or teacher comments.
 - Parents and guardians are provided with continuous, 24-hour access to PowerSchool, enabling them to review their child's academic performance, attendance records, and other pertinent information at their convenience.

4. **Provide parents with reasonable access to staff.**

Specifically, staff will be available for consultation with parents as follows:

- Back-to-School Night in September
- Parent/Teacher Conferences in November
- MTSS Meetings throughout the year, as needed
- Learning Support and Speech IEP meetings throughout the year, as needed
- Individual parent conferences as needed
- Title I Night
- Title I/PAC parent meetings/workshops
- Email

5. **Provide parents opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class and to observe classroom activities** (*clearances needed, information can be obtained at goldenrams.com under RESOURCES)

- Parents are invited to read in the classrooms.*
- Parents are invited to Title I Night to participate in activities with their children.
- Parents may volunteer to be Room Parents.*
- Parents may volunteer to chaperone field trips.*
- Parents may volunteer to be lunch buddies.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

We, as parents, will support our child's learning in the following ways:

- Encourage proper study habits, including quiet study time at home.
- Promote my child's self-esteem by talking about school work and activities.
- Reinforce respect for self and others.
- Stay informed about my child's progress by checking grades and attendance online, attending conferences, reviewing their folder/backpack daily, and communicating with the school as needed.
- Attend school events and/or volunteer to help in the classroom or at school activities.
- Encourage good reading habits by reading to or with my child.
- Limit my child's screen time (TV, tablets, etc.) and help select worthwhile programs.
- Encourage proper hygiene.
- Follow the district dress code.
- Encourage daily attendance and provide a written excuse for any student who is absent.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As students, we will share responsibility for improving our academic achievement and meeting the state's high standards. Specifically, I will:

- Complete my work on time.
- Read at least 20 minutes a day outside of school time.
- Give to my parents/guardian all notices and information from my school every day.
- Work hard and challenge myself.
- Ask for help when needed.
- Respect myself and others and take responsibility for my behavior.
- Discuss with my parents/guardian what we did in school during the day.
- Limit my screen time (computer, TV, gaming device) and make time for reading.
- Be prepared for school every day — book bag, HW folder, pencil, etc.

HIGHLANDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WILL:

- Involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of the school's parental involvement policy in an organized, ongoing, and timely way.
- Involve parents in the joint development of any school-wide program plan in an organized, ongoing, and timely way.
- Hold PAC (Parent Advisory Council) meeting(s) to inform parents of the school's participation in Title I programs, and to explain the Title I requirements and the right of parents to be involved in Title I programs.
- Provide information to parents in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon the request of parents with disabilities, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that parents can understand.
- Provide parents of participating children with information promptly about Title I programs that includes a description and explanation of the school's curriculum, the forms of academic assessment used to measure children's progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
- Provide opportunities for suggestions and, when appropriate, for participation in decisions about their children's education.
- Provide an individual student report about the performance of their child on the state assessment in Math and English Language Arts.

HES STAFF DIRECTORY

Name	Phone Ext.	Position	Room #	Name	Phone Ext.	Position	Room #
Mrs. Kumar	2605	Principal	Office	Mr. Trozzi	2610	Assistant Principal	Office
Mrs. Garlets	2600	Secretary	Office	Mrs. Howells	2601	Secretary	Office
Mrs. Skradski	2631	Guidance	Office	Ms. Reynolds	2700	Nurse	Nurse
Mrs. Boyer	2650	Guidance	Office	Ms. Kutschbach	2010	Sp.Ed.	10
Mrs. Zendarski	2108	1	109	Mr. Celko	2019	2	19
Mrs. Meldon	2106	1	106	Mrs. Hrivnak	2109	2	108
Mrs. Mravintz	2116	1	116	Ms. McCurdy	2101	2	101
Mrs. Robinson	2113	1	113	Mrs. Krenzer	2102	2	102
Mrs. O'Malley	2111	1	111	Mrs. Snyder	2110	2	110
Mrs. Walter	2114	1	114	Mr. Stinelli	2018	2	18
Ms. Burris	2214	3	214	Ms. Calabrese	2216	4	216
Mrs. Chalmers	2209	3	209	Mrs. Crowell	2218	4	218
Mrs. Chester	2202	3	202	Mrs. Holzer	2220	4	220
Mrs. DeMaria	2213	3	213	Mrs. Ferguson	2215	4	215
Mrs. Johns	2203	3	203	Mrs. Pinzok	2219	4	219
Mrs. Milberger	2201	3	201	Ms. Cirigliano	2217	4	217
Mrs. Baker	2230	Title 1	Library Room D	TBD	2205	Speech	205
Ms. Izydore	2228	Title 1	Library Room A	Ms. Fantuzzo	2208	Speech	208
Mrs. DiMascio	2231	MTSS	Library Room E	Ms. Ferrante	2112	Behavior Specialist	212
Mrs. Yeckel	2229	Title 1	Library Room C	Mrs. Polcha	2204	Speech	204
Mrs. Resek	2206	Learning Support	206	Mrs. Mentecky	2232	GATE	Library Room F
TBD	2115	Special Education	115	Mrs. Brancato	2017	Emotional Support	17
Mrs. Stawinski	2103	Life Skills Support	103	Mrs. Wyant	2104	Autistic Support	104
Mr. Heasley	2013	Phys. Ed.	Gym	Mrs. Grubbs	2223	Art	223
Mr. Polcha	2013	Phys. Ed.	Gym	Ms. Ziemianski	2224	Art	224
Ms. Ludwig	2021	Music	21	Ms. Drayer	2226	Computer	226
Mr. Beresik	2011	Music	11	Mrs. Quade	2227	Library	Library

SECTION 1—SCHOOL INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES

DAILY SCHEDULE		TWO-HOUR DELAY	EARLY DISMISSAL
Doors Open	8:20 a.m.	10:20 a.m.	8:20 a.m.
Breakfast	8:20-8:50 a.m.	No breakfast served	8:20-8:50 a.m.
School Begins	8:55 a.m.	10:55 a.m.	8:55 a.m.
Dismissal	3:25 p.m.	3:25 p.m.	12:10 p.m.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAM

Highlands will continue to offer a FREE breakfast and a FREE lunch program for all enrolled students.

Highlands follows HHKFA regulations by offering students whole-grain-rich breads, low-fat, low-sodium, and lower-sugar foods. Students will be provided with a variety of fruits and vegetables daily. New this year is the Healthy Kids for Whole Milk Act - we will be offering whole and 2% milk in addition to fat-free, Skim, and flavored.

Highlands has integrated a new student account system for food service, utilizing *School Cafe*. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information and to add money to your account.

A “closed lunch” program is in effect. Students may bring their lunch or receive a free lunch from the school cafeteria. All students must eat in the cafeteria. Pizza and/or fast-food deliveries are not permitted.

ASK YOUR CHILD: What did you eat today? Did you try anything new? What vegetable or fruit choices did you have? What drink did you have? Children’s nutrition and diet drive more than just their health and physical attributes. It also keeps their brains in high gear, allowing them to remain more focused and learn. Please encourage your child to ditch the brown bag and join the line for a nutritious, delicious meal in our café!

Please contact Stacey Waffensmith, Food Services Director, at 724-226-1000, ext. 4180 with any questions.

ARRIVAL

Students **must be in homeroom by 8:55 a.m.**, or they will be marked as having an *illegal absence* for the day. Students who arrive tardy to school **must be signed in** by a parent/guardian. An automated call will be sent to all homes/families of students who were marked absent from the homeroom. **You do not need to call the office to let us know that your student will be absent.**

ATTENDANCE POLICY

One of the most essential items for a student’s academic success is good attendance. Good attendance is a habit every student should develop. A student with excessive absenteeism cannot be taught effectively and cannot keep up with the work missed in class. To establish and maintain good attendance habits among all

students, Highlands has adopted a strict, effective attendance policy in accordance with compulsory school laws.

*The School Laws of Pennsylvania classify all absences as **unexcused** or **illegal**, except for the following reasons: illness of the pupil, death in the family, religious reasons, and “exceptionally urgent reasons” such as quarantine, recovery from an accident, required court attendance, approved family educational trips, and educational tours.*

Highlands will enforce the state’s compulsory attendance laws to eliminate absenteeism. Parents can access their child’s attendance at any time by logging into the PowerSchool system at www.goldenrams.com.

ABSENCE REPORTING / INFORMATION

- It is not necessary to call the school when your child is absent. You are welcome to communicate with your child’s teacher about absences, but please understand that a phone call will not excuse an absence. Handwritten or email documentation is required for our records. Please include in the excuse your child’s first and last name, grade, date of absence(s), and reason for the absence. Written excuses must be received within 3 days of the absence and are not accepted late.
- A call will be made to all students' homes/families who **are** marked absent from their homeroom.
- Educational trips (up to 5 days) must be pre-approved by the building principal. Requests must be submitted at least one week in advance of the trip and should be submitted to the main office. Educational Trip/Tour forms can be obtained from the main office secretaries or the district website, <https://www.goldenrams.com/departments/attendance/resources/educational-trip-forms>.
- **If an excuse is not provided to the school within 3 days of the student’s absence, the absence(s) will be recorded as an illegal absence.** Excuses will not be accepted if they are turned in late.
- If a student has three illegal absences, parents will receive a Notice of Truancy in the mail notifying them of the illegal days and encouraging them to participate in an attendance improvement meeting.
- After the 6th illegal absence, a letter will be mailed with a date and time for a Student Attendance Improvement Plan conference. If parents cannot attend due to work, they should contact the school office within 48 hours of the meeting to reschedule. Failure to participate in the meeting and/or continued absences may result in a citation with the local magistrate.
- When a student reaches an 8th Excused absence, a Warning Letter will be mailed to notify parents that all absences beyond 10 parent-excused absences requires a doctor’s excuse, or the absence will be considered illegal.
- **Truancy is defined as three unexcused absences; habitually truant is defined as six unexcused absences.**
- **If a student has 10 days of consecutive non-attendance, they will be withdrawn from Highlands School District.** Re-enrollment is required to attend Highlands School District in the future.
- Please contact the District Attendance Officer if you have any questions about the policy at 724-226-2400, press 3, ext. 3007.

EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE

After an absence, a student **MUST** provide a written note or email excuse to the student’s school secretary. Students may also submit their written excuses, with a parent signature or doctor’s note if necessary, to their

homeroom teacher, who will then file the excuse at the main office. The excuse must include the student's full name, date(s) of absence(s), reason(s) for absence(s), and the signature of the parent or guardian. The excuse must be submitted upon return to school, or the absence will be classified as illegal. A student signing for their parent or guardian is unacceptable, and the excuse will not be counted. Attendance contacts by building are:

- o Highlands High School, HHSAttendance@goldenrams.com

Main office 724-226-2400, press 4, and follow the prompts

- o Highlands Middle School, HMSAttendance@goldenrams.com

Main office 724-226-2400, press 3, and follow the prompts

- o Highlands Elementary School, HESAttendance@goldenrams.com

724-226-2400, press 2, and follow the prompts

- o Highlands Early Childhood Center, HECCAttendance@goldenrams.com

724-226-2400, press 1, and follow the prompts

- A parent is permitted ten excuses per school year. Every subsequent absence will require a doctor's excuse with a specific date from the office.
- Parents and students should make every effort to schedule appointments for special services after school. Administrators and teachers discourage the practice of dismissal during school hours, but if it is necessary to be excused during the day, the student must follow this procedure:
 - Submit to the main office a written request from the parent stating the reason and time the student is to be excused. **Requests made by phone will not be honored.**
 - School personnel may call home to verify the validity of any note at any time.
 - For any early dismissals, the parent/guardian must report to the main office of the school with state identification to be provided to the office staff to verify identification. The parent/guardian must sign out the student before the student is released to their parent/guardian. Early dismissals for school dances will not be accepted, and the student will not be able to attend the dance.

ABSENCE FOR VACATION/EDUCATIONAL TRIP/TOUR

For optimal student success, we request that you do not schedule vacations when school is in session. Absences due to family vacations/educational tours will only be considered legal if the following conditions are met:

- Submit a request on the required district form, which is available in the main office, this link <https://www.goldenrams.com/departments/attendance/resources/educational-trip-forms> (see Appendix), detailing the nature and dates of the vacation to the building principal at least one week in advance of the departure date.
- The length of the vacation does not exceed five (5) school days. Any days exceeding five will result in illegal absences as they will not be approved.

- If a student is absent for ten (10) consecutive school days, the student will be withdrawn from Highlands School District. The family will be required to re-enroll the child upon return.
- Parents will be responsible for ensuring that the child completes any missed schoolwork before they return to school.
- Students with excessive absences may not be approved. Permission will be at the principal's discretion.
- Students referred to the magistrate for attendance issues may not be approved. Permission will be at the principal's discretion.

ILLNESS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

A student's claim of illness does not necessarily justify being excused from class or school. Students who claim to be ill must:

- Ask the teacher's permission to see the nurse, who will determine the degree of illness. If the nurse is not present, the student should report to the office. If a student is sent home from school by the nurse, that day will be nurse-excused.
- If necessary, the nurse or a member of the office staff (NOT THE STUDENT) will contact the home to arrange for transportation.
- If the parent, near relative, or designated person cannot be contacted, the student will remain in school.
- Parents may request the child's homework assignments during an extended absence, and should plan for the work to be picked up after a 24-hour notice.
- For all early dismissals, parents/guardians must report to the front office of the school with state identification to be provided to the office staff to verify identification. The parent/guardian must sign out the student before the student is released.

TARDINESS

Highlands Elementary School (HES) and Highlands Early Childhood Center (HECC)

- Students who arrive between 8:56 AM and 10:35 AM will be marked Tardy.
 - Any student arriving after 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.
 - Students who arrive after 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for the whole day.
- Students who leave school before 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a whole day.
 - Students who leave school between 10:35 AM and 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for half a day.

After five tardies during a school year at HMS, HES, and HECC, warning letters are sent to the parent/guardian. After a student has accumulated 10 tardies, they receive a half-day illegal absence. For every five tardies following the ten tardies, an additional one-half day of illegal absence is charged against a student's record. After 3 days of illegal absence, a notice is sent to the parent/guardian.

Students who continue to be habitually truant from school may be referred to Children, Youth and Families, or may lead to a citation with the local magistrate. Penalties for conviction include fines, community service, and/or mandatory participation in truancy prevention programs. All truancy citations require the parent/guardian to attend a hearing before the magistrate.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

The decision to delay starting times, cancel school, or dismiss students early due to weather factors or other emergencies is based solely on the safety and welfare of students. These situations necessarily require the understanding and cooperation of parents. Parents who are not ordinarily at home at times of morning delays, school cancellations, or early dismissals should make arrangements at the start of the school year for their children to be supervised at home, or for them to report to a pre-arranged, safe place when such an emergency occurs.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

- Announcements of school emergencies will be broadcast on local radio and TV stations, the School Messenger phone system, the district's website, www.goldenrams.com, the website's E-Alert (e-mail message) system, Facebook, Twitter, and the Highlands mobile app.
- Due to a two-hour delay, starting times at schools and bus pick-up times will be adjusted accordingly for K-12 students.
- The school breakfast program will be canceled due to a two-hour delay.
- Early dismissals due to an emergency will be called only when necessary.
- Additional information or changes during a particular emergency will be broadcast if necessary.

HEALTH SERVICES

The nurse's suite is on the first floor and supervised by a certified school nurse. If students are ill, hurt, or in need of a change of clothes, their classroom teacher will send them to the nurse's suite.

If your child needs to be dismissed from school because of illness, the school nurse or front office staff will contact the parent/guardian.

EXAMINATIONS

Pennsylvania requires each student to receive a comprehensive health examination conducted upon original entry, sixth grade, and eleventh grade. Families may have these examinations completed by their family physician. Forms are available on the Highlands School District website.

Pennsylvania requires each student to receive a dental screening upon original entry into school and in grades three and seven. Families may have these examinations completed by their family dentist. Forms are available on the Highlands School District website.

SCREENINGS

As school law requires, hearing and screenings are conducted in grades one through three. Vision screening tests are performed in grades one through four.

In addition, a yearly screening program consisting of weight and height measurements is completed on every student. Abnormal screening results will be communicated to parents/guardians. Please contact the school nurse if you choose to opt your child out of health screenings.

By the school policy, the parents/guardians of students who are to receive physical and dental examinations or screenings shall be notified. The notice shall include the date and location of the examination or screening, and notice that the parents/guardians may attend. In addition, the notice shall encourage the parent/guardian to have the examination or screening conducted by the student's private physician or dentist at the parent's/guardian's expense to promote continuity of care. Such a statement may also include notification that the student may be exempted from such examination or screening if it is contrary to the parent's/guardian's religious beliefs.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All students shall be immunized against specific diseases by state law and regulations, unless specifically exempt for religious or medical reasons. Immunization requirement information is available on the Highlands School District website.

MEDICATION

All medication shall be brought to the nurse's office by the parent/guardian or by another adult designated by the parent/guardian. All medication shall be stored in the original pharmacy-labeled container and kept in a locked cabinet designated for the storage of medication. Medications that require refrigeration shall be stored and locked in a refrigerator designated only for medications. The district shall not store more than a thirty-day supply of an individual student's medication.

1. No medication, prescription, or non-prescription (over the counter) will be administered in school except by the Direct Medication Order Form of a licensed health provider that is accompanied by a parent/guardian-completed and signed Highlands Medication Administration Permission Form. This paperwork must be in place before any medications are dispensed to students. Highlands School District does not supply any medications.

2. Prescription medication must be presented in the original pharmacy bottle and be accompanied by a Highlands Medication Administration Permission Form.

Prescription medication shall be delivered in its original packaging and labeled with:

- a. Name, address, telephone, and federal DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) number of the pharmacy.
- b. Student's name.
- c. Directions for use (dosage, frequency, and time of administration, route, special instructions).
- d. Name and registration number of the licensed prescriber.
- e. Prescription serial number.
- f. Date filled initially.

g. Name of medication and amount dispensed.

h. Controlled substance statement, if applicable.

3. Non-prescription medications (over-the-counter) must also be presented in the original labeled container with the child's name on it and written permission from the parent/guardian, as well as a doctor's note.

4. Unlabeled medications will not be given at school.

5. Medications are to be kept in the Nurse's office. Students are not permitted to carry their medications with them throughout the day.

6. Students caught carrying Prescription or Non-prescription medications into the building, without written permission from a parent/guardian, will be dealt with according to the Code of Conduct. Students caught carrying Prescription or Non-prescription medications in the building will receive consequences indicated in the Code of Conduct.

7. It is the parents' responsibility to supply and deliver all medications with proper instructions from a physician and the Highlands Medication Administration Permission Form to the main office to be administered during school hours.

STUDENT SELF-ADMINISTRATION OF ASTHMA INHALERS AND EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS (Policy 210.1)

Before a student may possess or use an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector in the school setting, the Board shall require the following:[1][8]

1. A written request from the parent/guardian that the school comply with the order of the licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. Please contact the school nurse for the request to self-administer medication.

2. A written statement from the parent/guardian acknowledging that the school is not responsible for ensuring the medication is taken and relieving the district and its employees of responsibility for the benefits or consequences of the prescribed medication.

3. A written statement from the licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, or physician assistant that states:

a. Name of the drug.

b. Prescribed dosage.

c. Time medication is to be taken.

d. Length of time medication is prescribed.

e. Diagnosis or reason medication is needed, unless confidential.

f. Potential serious reaction or side effects of medication.

g. Emergency response.

h. If the child is qualified and able to self-administer the medication.

4. A written acknowledgment from the school nurse that the student has demonstrated that s/he is capable of self-administration of the asthma inhaler and/or epinephrine auto-injector in the school setting.

Determination of competency for self-administration shall be based on the student's age, cognitive function, maturity, and demonstration of responsible behavior.[1]

5. A written acknowledgement from the student that s/he has received instruction from the student's licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner or physician assistant on proper safety precautions for the handling and disposal of the asthma inhaler and/or epinephrine auto-injector, including acknowledgement that the student will not allow other students to have access to the prescribed medication and that s/he understands appropriate safeguards.

The district reserves the right to require a statement from the licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, or physician assistant for the continued use of a medication beyond the specified period.[1]

A written request for student use of an asthma inhaler and/or epinephrine auto-injector shall be submitted annually, along with required written statements from the parent/guardian and an updated prescription. If there is a change in the student's prescribed care plan, level of self-management, or school circumstances during the school year, the parent/guardian and the licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, or physician assistant shall update the written statements.

The student shall notify the school nurse immediately following each use of an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector.

Students shall be prohibited from sharing, giving, selling, and using an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector in any manner other than as prescribed during school hours, at any time while on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, and during the time spent traveling to and from school and school-sponsored activities. Violations of this policy, provisions of a Service Agreement or IEP, or demonstration of unwillingness or inability to safeguard the asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector may result in loss of privilege to self-carry the asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector and disciplinary action in accordance with Board policy and applicable procedural safeguards.

Suppose the district denies a student's request to self-carry an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector, or the student has lost the privilege of self-carrying an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector. In that case, the student's prescribed medication shall be appropriately stored at a location near the student. The school nurse, other designated school employees, and the student's classroom teachers shall be informed of where the medication is stored and the means to access the medication.

STUDENT POSSESSION AND USE OF DIABETES MEDICATION AND MONITORING EQUIPMENT (Policy 209.2)

Prior to student possession or use of diabetes medication and monitoring equipment, the Board shall require the following:

1. A written request from the parent/guardian that the school comply with the instructions of the student's health care practitioner. The request from the parent/guardian shall include a statement relieving the district

and its employees of responsibility for the prescribed medication or monitoring equipment and acknowledging that the school is not responsible for ensuring that the medication is taken or the monitoring equipment is used.

2. A written statement from the student's health care practitioner that provides:

- a. Name of the drug.
- b. Prescribed dosage.
- c. Times when medication is to be taken.
- d. Times when monitoring equipment is to be used.
- e. Length of time medication and monitoring equipment are prescribed.
- f. Diagnosis or reason that medication and monitoring equipment are needed.
- g. Potential serious reactions to medication that may occur.
- h. Emergency response.
- i. Whether the child is competent and able to self-administer the medication or monitoring equipment and to practice proper safety precautions.

3. A written acknowledgment from the school nurse that the student has demonstrated that s/he is capable of self-administration of the medication and use of the monitoring equipment.

4. A written acknowledgment from the student that s/he has received instruction from the student's health care practitioner on proper safety precautions for the handling and disposal of the medications and monitoring equipment, including acknowledgment that the student will not allow other students to have access to the medication and monitoring equipment and that s/he understands appropriate safeguards.

The written request for student possession and use of diabetes medication and monitoring equipment shall be reviewed annually, along with the required written statements from the parent/guardian and the student's health care practitioner. If there is a change in the student's prescribed care plan, level of self-management, or school circumstances during the school year, the parent/guardian and the student's health care practitioner shall update the written statements.

Students shall be prohibited from sharing, giving, selling, and using diabetes medication and monitoring equipment in any manner other than as prescribed during school hours, at any time while on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, and during the time spent traveling to and from school and school-sponsored activities. Violations of this policy, provisions of a Service Agreement or IEP, or demonstration of unwillingness or inability to safeguard the medication and monitoring equipment may result in loss of privilege to self-carry the diabetes medication and monitoring equipment, and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Board policy and applicable procedural safeguards.

If the district prohibits a student from possessing and self-administering diabetes medication and operating monitoring equipment, or if a student is not capable of self-administering diabetes medication or operating monitoring equipment, the district shall ensure that the diabetes medication and monitoring equipment are appropriately stored in a readily accessible location in the student's building. The school nurse and other designated school employees shall be informed of where the medication and monitoring equipment are stored and the means to access them.

ADMINISTRATION OF NALOXONE

To ensure the health and safety of its students and staff, the Highlands School District will maintain and administer an opioid antagonist in its schools, specifically Naloxone, for use during emergencies to any student or staff member experiencing a known or suspected opioid overdose, regardless of a previous history of opioid abuse. In compliance with school board policy, the District's medical director has issued a non-patient-specific order to the school nurse to administer Naloxone on-site.

Administration shall notify the parent/guardian of any student directly involved in an incident involving the use of controlled substances immediately, as soon as practicable. Any student who experiences a drug overdose shall be referred to the district's Student Assistance Program.

Additionally, the Administration shall immediately report incidents involving the use of controlled substances on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on a conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity, to the local police department that has jurisdiction over the school's property, in accordance with state law and regulations.

MANDATED REPORTING

Act 299 (Pennsylvania General Assembly - December 30, 1970) amends Act 91 (1967), known as The Child Abuse Law (dealing with gross physical neglect or injury to children under eighteen years of age), as follows:

"Any school nurse whose examination of a child less than eighteen years of age or any school teacher whose observation of a child less than eighteen years of age discloses evidence of gross physical neglect or injury shall immediately report such an incident.

Any person who makes or participates in the making of a report shall be immune from any liability."

All concerns of abuse will be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-932-0313). This is the law. All teachers, school nurses, and social workers are bound by law to report concerns of neglect or abuse that are brought to their attention.

PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTERING MEDICINE TO STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS (Policy 210)

The administration of prescribed medication to a student during school hours by the direction of a parent/guardian and family physician will be permitted only when failure to take such medicine would jeopardize the health of the student, or if the student is unable to attend school without the medicine during school hours.

No medication, prescription, or non-prescription (over the counter) will be administered in school except the Direct Medication Order Form of a licensed health provider and accompanied by a parent's/guardian's completed and signed Highlands Medication Administration Permission Form. This paperwork must be in

place before any medications are dispensed to students. Highlands School District does not supply any medications, and it is the parents' responsibility to provide and deliver all medications to be administered during school hours.

Only the School Nurse or other licensed health personnel is solely responsible for administering medications to students. Students are NOT permitted to carry or possess any medications while at school. All medication is to be taken in the presence of the school nurse. In the case of inhalers and EpiPens, the parent/guardian and student will follow the procedures for possession and use of emergency medications. The parent/guardian of the child must assume responsibility for informing the school nurse of any changes in the child's health or changes in medication. A new "Medication Order" from the licensed provider and the Medication Permission Form, completed by the parent, will be required with each change in medication and at the start of each school year. The complete Medication Policy may be viewed at any school building or online at www.goldenrams.com.

STUDENT DRESS GUIDELINES

To keep the focus on learning and not on dress, the following guidelines are in place.

Acceptable	NOT Permitted
T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweaters	Crop Tops, Halter Tops, Pajamas, Hats, Hoods
Dresses, skirts (fingertip length)	Clothes with excessive holes
Jeans, sweatpants	Clothes that are excessively short/tight (fingertip length is appropriate)
Shorts (fingertip length)	Clothing or jewelry that refers to tobacco, alcohol, weapons, violence, profanity, gangs, sex, or drugs.
Socks, Tennis Shoes, Sandals, Boots	Visible underwear
	Flip Flops, Slides, Slippers, High Heels

No head coverings are permitted inside the school building. Students are required to remove any headwear upon entering the building and throughout the school day. This includes, but is not limited to, caps, hats, hoods, bandanas, athletic sweatbands, sunglasses, headsets, or any other head covering (for both male and female students). Any headgear worn due to religious beliefs and/or medical reasons is acceptable.

The building principal will make the final decisions about the appropriateness of dress. Parents may be required to supply a change in attire.

STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

Students are responsible for returning all property belonging to the district that has been distributed to them (i.e., iPads, Chromebooks, calculators, uniforms, textbooks, etc). This equipment must be in good working order. If the item is damaged, altered, or lost in any way, the student is financially responsible for the item's replacement. Students are required to fulfill all financial obligations annually. Obligations must be current to participate in after-school activities and school-sponsored events. Legal action may be pursued by the district for unfulfilled commitments.

SAFETY

Please make certain that your child knows how to cross streets and intersections to and from school. Your child must be taught to come home directly after school. They should know that crossing guards are there for protection and should obey them. They should know about proper behavior on the school bus.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY DRILLS

According to the PA School Law, fire drills shall be conducted periodically, but not less than once a month. All teachers will communicate fire drill procedures to their classes. When the fire alarm is given, without exception, the building must be evacuated. Students will exit *quickly* and *quietly* with their teacher in an orderly fashion and meet outside at their assigned area. Emergency Drills will be held both on and off-site.

During a fire drill, students may be located in various areas throughout the building, such as the cafeteria, specials' classrooms, or at recess. Staff members will be expected to review fire drill procedures specific to each of these locations to ensure students are adequately prepared in the event of an emergency.

BUS EVACUATION DRILLS

The purpose of school bus evacuation drills is to have the bus driver and each student know precisely what to do in case of an emergency. Emergencies may occur because of fires or accidents, and in every instance, the school bus driver will give the evacuation instructions. If the bus driver is unable to carry out his duties, a predesignated student should assume leadership to carry out the drill. The two evacuation drills are scheduled during the school year by the Director of Transportation.

ACCIDENT INSURANCE FOR STUDENTS

Since the Highlands School District does not carry insurance coverage for student accidents, parents are responsible for the costs of medical care. The Highlands School Board does provide a Student Accident Insurance Program, which parents can purchase for students. This program offers plans for both "school day" and twenty-four-hour coverage.

Parents are advised to review the insurance program package information, which is announced and posted on the district website www.goldenrams.com

PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS

A parent or student who has a complaint or concern should first speak directly with the teacher involved. If necessary, the matter may then be brought to the principal. Do not rely on hearsay or "second-hand" information. Parents should make an appointment to ensure adequate time to discuss the problem with the teacher/principal.

VISITORS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

For the safety of our students and staff, any parent or visitor to the building **MUST** provide a valid Driver's License or ID to gain permission to enter the building and obtain an identification badge.

Parents who need to speak with a teacher **MUST** prearrange a meeting as per [Board Policy 907](#)

FIELD TRIPS

As part of the educational program, children may attend field trips supervised by classroom teachers. Students are permitted to participate in field trips only with a completed parent permission form. Field trips are a privilege. Students may lose this privilege if their behavior impedes the safety of the students and/or staff.

TECHNOLOGY

Purpose and Scope

Use of technology at Highlands School District is a **privilege** that supports teaching, learning, collaboration, and school operations. District technology resources are provided primarily for **educational and other school-related purposes** and must be used responsibly, ethically, and in compliance with District policies, school rules, and applicable laws.

District Technology Resources

The district provides students access to devices, computer systems, networks, software, digital platforms, accounts, and Internet services (collectively, “technology resources”). Technology resources remain the property of Highlands School District (or its licensors/service providers).

The district may employ safeguards such as filtering, security controls, and device management. To maintain a safe and effective learning environment, use of District technology resources may be **monitored, inspected, and reviewed**, consistent with District policy and applicable law.

Acceptable Use Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Use technology resources for **educational and other school-related purposes** as directed by staff.
- Follow **Board Policy 815 – Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers, and Network Resources**, along with all other District policies, local, state, and federal laws. Current District policies are available at <https://www.goldenrams.com/school-board/highlands-sd-board-policy-manual>.
- Protect login credentials, keep passwords private, and report suspected account compromise to staff.
- Respect the privacy and rights of others and communicate respectfully in all digital environments.
- Use digital tools—including artificial intelligence (AI) and online resources—in ways that support learning and comply with expectations for **academic honesty and integrity**.

Prohibited Uses

Students may **not**:

- Damage, alter, disable, or attempt to bypass security features on District devices, networks, accounts, or software.
- Attempt to gain unauthorized access to accounts, systems, files, or data, or assist others in doing so.

- Access, create, transmit, or store content that is illegal, inappropriate for school, harmful, threatening, harassing, or disruptive to the school environment.
- Use technology to bully, harass, threaten, impersonate others, or violate intellectual property rights.
- Use personal devices, hotspots, external software, or peripherals in ways that interfere with instruction, testing, or network performance, unless permitted by staff.

Care of Equipment

Students are responsible for the appropriate care and use of District-issued or school-owned technology. Loss, theft, or damage should be reported immediately to the building office and/or designated staff. Students may be financially responsible for damage caused by misuse or negligence, consistent with District policy and procedures.

1:1 Student Device Program

Highlands School District provides students with a District-issued device as part of its 1:1 learning program. These devices are intended to support daily instruction, assignments, assessments, and other school-related activities.

Prior to being issued a District device, a Student/Parent Device Use Agreement form must be completed in PowerSchool. Students may not be issued a device until the required agreement form has been submitted.

Students are expected to:

- Bring their assigned device to school each day, fully charged and ready for use.
- Use only their **assigned device and account**; sharing devices, accounts, or login credentials is not permitted.
- Use the device in accordance with teacher directions, classroom expectations, and all District policies.
- Transport and store devices safely, including using protective cases when provided.
- Keep devices in their original condition; **devices may not be defaced with stickers, markings, writing, engraving, or other alterations.**

Students may **not**:

- Install, remove, or alter software, applications, profiles, or security settings without District permission.
- Attempt to bypass web filtering, device management systems, monitoring tools, or other security controls.
- Use the device for non-school purposes in a manner that interferes with learning or violates District policy.

Devices remain the property of Highlands School District and must be returned upon request, upon withdrawal, or upon graduation, consistent with District procedures.

Monitoring and Privacy

Students should have **no expectation of privacy** when using District technology resources, including District devices, accounts, networks, and systems. The district may access, monitor, review, and/or disclose information associated with the use of District technology resources as permitted by policy and law.

Consequences for Misuse

Violation of technology policies may result in disciplinary action and/or restriction of access, which may include, but is not limited to:

- Loss or restriction of technology privileges
- School-based disciplinary consequences
- Suspension, consistent with the Student Code of Conduct
- Restitution for damage, when applicable and permitted by policy
- Referral to law enforcement when required or appropriate

Actions that interfere with the safe, secure, and effective operation of District technology systems **may** result in disciplinary action **and/or loss of computer privileges**, depending on the severity, impact, and frequency of the violation, and consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and applicable procedures.

Acknowledgment

- Use of Highlands School District technology resources constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of these expectations and all related District policies.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost articles, when found, are taken to the office where the owner can claim them. Each year, the school accumulates numerous unclaimed items. Please help by labeling all items. All unclaimed items at the end of the school year will be given to a local charity organization.

PETS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

Pets are not permitted on the school grounds or in the elementary buildings without the consent of the school district. This includes before and after school hours, as students enter the building, and during dismissal.

SECTION 2—INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMMING and STUDENT SERVICES

The goal of Highlands Elementary School's instructional program is to equip each child to be an informed, caring, and effective citizen. We expect our students to express ideas through speaking and writing, work with mathematical operations, investigate, inquire, and collaboratively solve problems. All students are also offered experiences in Art, Music, Physical Education, and Library. Units of instruction in conflict resolution, bullying prevention, nutrition education, career education, drug, alcohol, and tobacco awareness are part of the total curriculum.

We use the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) framework, which is a comprehensive system of supports including standards-aligned, culturally responsive, and high-quality core instruction, universal screening, flexible grouping, data-based decisions, tiered services and supports, and parental engagement. Students will be engaged in individual, small group, corrective, remedial, and/or enrichment opportunities. Students learn best when they accept challenging yet achievable goals and are given individualized, constructive feedback. A positive emotional climate promotes learning. At Highlands Elementary School, the potential of each child is celebrated.

ACADEMICS

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The following scale will be used:

EE=Exceeding Expectations

ME=Meeting Expectations

AE=Approaching Expectations

PE=Minimally Progressing Toward Expectations

HOMEWORK

Homework is an expectation for all students and is designed to reinforce and practice skills taught in the classroom. Assignments may be given daily or weekly at the discretion of the teacher. Students are expected to complete homework on time, and families are encouraged to support their child by establishing routines, providing a quiet workspace, and reviewing completed work. Teachers will acknowledge all homework submitted and will determine whether the work meets expectations for completion and quality.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

The school provides instructional materials and supplies at no cost to the student. There will be a charge for items that are damaged or lost. The amount will not exceed the price of the replacement.

REPORT CARDS

Every student enrolled in the Highlands School District will be issued an electronic report card that will be available ONLINE through PowerSchool every nine weeks.

The aim of the report card is to:

- Inform the parents of the student's progress
- Help the student to self-appraise
- Help the teacher study each student's achievement of the Pennsylvania standards
- Enable the home and school to work together in helping the student.

RETENTION IN GRADE

Grade retention is generally considered a last-resort option. The decision to retain a child must be grounded in the belief that an additional year in a given grade will be in the *child's best interest*. The procedure for recommending retention shall be by a conference of the student's parents and the teachers, principals, and the school counselor.

BENCHMARK AND STANDARDIZED TESTING

Testing is an integral part of assessing student achievement and improving teaching methods. Students must be well-rested and prepared for these testing situations. Throughout the year, parents are given specific information on the type of test that will be provided, the date of the testing, and the results using letters and calendar publications.

In Pennsylvania, schools are required to give the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) to students in grades 3-8. These tests measure the Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards. All students will be assessed annually on the PSSA exam in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

In addition, students in grades K–2 will take the Acadience assessment, and students in grades 3–8 will take the Firefly assessment three times each school year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION / PROPER DRESS

The elementary program has been structured to provide your child with a wide range of experiences. These activities range from basic skill development to creative movement. All areas within the program provide for a comprehensive foundation of values and learning experiences. Please remember that all clothing should be comfortably loose to allow freedom of movement at all times. Each student should be dressed appropriately for total activity participation. Dressy and restrictive types of clothing are strongly discouraged, as is excessive jewelry. Physical Education is a state-mandated requirement.

STUDENT SERVICES

Highlands School District is committed to ensuring that all students have access to meaningful and successful educational experiences. When students encounter challenges that impact their academic progress, the District works to provide the supports necessary to reduce barriers and promote growth, engagement, and confidence in learning.

The District's Student Services Department plays a vital role in this work by supporting students, families, and staff through a comprehensive network of services, including:

- School Counseling

- Special Education
- English as Second
- Gifted Education
- Section 504 Services
- School Nursing
- School Psychology
- School-Based Mental Health Services

These services are coordinated across all schools to meet the diverse needs of students and to support the overall educational program within each building. Through collaboration and a commitment to student-centered practices, Highlands School District strives to create an environment where every student can succeed.

SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

The Highlands School Counseling Department provides services to support all students in the areas of academic achievement, career readiness, and personal/social development. Aligned with the American School Counselor Association model and Pennsylvania Career Standards, counselors deliver support through classroom lessons, small groups, and individual meetings.

School counselors help students build academic skills, develop positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and plan for life after graduation. Their work supports the district's commitment to developing Respectful, Accountable, Motivated, and Safe (RAMS) students.

For more information, please contact your building school counselor or visit the district website.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Highlands School District provides special education programs and services to students identified with disabilities who require specially designed instruction, in accordance with state and federal law.

Students are educated in the least restrictive environment and have access to the general education curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate. Services are delivered through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) based on each student's unique needs.

The District conducts ongoing Child Find activities to identify students who may be eligible for services. Families who have concerns about their child's development or academic progress are encouraged to contact their child's school to request an evaluation.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RIGHTS (Special Education)

Parents/guardians of students with disabilities have the right to:

- Request an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services
- Participate in all IEP meetings and educational planning decisions
- Review and obtain copies of their child's educational records
- Receive prior written notice of proposed or refused changes to identification, evaluation, or placement
- Provide or deny consent for evaluations and services

- Request revisions to the IEP
- File a complaint, request mediation, or pursue a due process hearing if they disagree with the District's decisions.

Additional information regarding procedural safeguards is available upon request or on the district website.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE/ENGLISH LEARNER (EL) SERVICES

Highlands School District provides a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) for students identified as English Learners (ELs) whose dominant language is not English. Students are identified through a Home Language Survey and assessed to determine eligibility for services.

EL students receive English Language Development (ELD) instruction delivered by appropriately certified staff, along with supports and accommodations in all academic content areas. These services are designed to develop English language proficiency and support academic achievement.

EL students have equitable access to all academic programs and extracurricular activities. Parents/guardians will be notified of their child's identification, assessment results, and recommended program placement, and will receive ongoing updates on student progress.

Parents/guardians have the right to decline participation in EL services. Even if services are declined, students will continue to be assessed annually and provided appropriate supports to access the general education curriculum.

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Highlands School District provides gifted education services to students identified as mentally gifted and in need of specially designed instruction, in accordance with state regulations.

The District maintains a system to identify and evaluate students who may be eligible for gifted services. Parents/guardians may request an evaluation at any time. A Permission to Evaluate form will be provided upon request.

Students who qualify for gifted services receive a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) based on their unique educational needs. The GIEP is developed by a Gifted Multidisciplinary Team and includes goals, specially designed instruction, and appropriate educational programming.

The District provides all required notices to parents/guardians, ensures due process rights, and adheres to all timelines related to identification, evaluation, and programming. All student records are maintained in accordance with confidentiality requirements.

Information about gifted services and how to request an evaluation is available through the district website or by contacting your child's school.

504 SERVICES/SERVICE AGREEMENT

Highlands School District provides services and accommodations to eligible students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These services are designed to ensure that students with

disabilities have equal access to and participation in educational programs, services, and extracurricular activities.

The District conducts ongoing activities to identify, evaluate, and provide services to students who may be eligible under Section 504. Eligibility is based on the presence of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Parents/guardians who believe their child may be eligible for a Section 504 Plan may request an evaluation at any time. Requests may be made by contacting your child's teacher, school counselor, building principal, or the District's Section 504 Coordinator.

Parents/guardians will be provided with notice of their rights under Section 504, including the right to participate in the evaluation and accommodation planning process, review educational records, and utilize grievance or due process procedures if they disagree with the District's decisions.

For more information, please contact your child's school or the District's Section 504 Coordinator.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAP)

Highlands School District provides a Student Assistance Program (SAP), a systematic, team-based process designed to identify and support students experiencing barriers to learning, including academic, behavioral, mental health, and drug or alcohol concerns.

The SAP team, composed of trained school staff, works collaboratively with students and families to:

- Identify concerns impacting student performance or well-being
- Use data to determine appropriate supports
- Communicate with parents/guardians throughout the process
- Develop in-school support strategies
- Provide information and referrals to community resources when concerns extend beyond the school setting.

Students may be referred to SAP by school staff, parents/guardians, or through self-referral.

Participation in SAP recommendations and any community-based services is voluntary. Parent/guardian involvement is an essential part of the process.

All SAP information is handled in accordance with confidentiality requirements under state and federal law.

For more information or to request SAP support, please contact your child's school.

NURSING SERVICES

Please see the Health Services section of the handbook

COMPLIANCE NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications include the following, and additional notifications that can be found on the district's website.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (IDEA & CHAPTER 14)

The District must provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to eligible students who require specially designed instruction.

Students may qualify for services under one or more of the following disability categories:

- Autism
- Blindness or Visual Impairment
- Deafness or Hearing Impairment
- Developmental Delay
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Neurological Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Orthopedic/Physical Disability
- Emotional Disturbance
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment

Requesting an Evaluation

If you believe your child may have a disability and need special education services:

- A parent may request an evaluation at any time in writing, regardless of whether the child is enrolled in a district school
- The District must provide a Permission to Evaluate (PTE) within 10 calendar days of the request
- An evaluation must not occur without written parental consent
- Evaluations are conducted by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) at no cost to the parent.

Following the evaluation:

- A written Evaluation Report (ER) is provided
- The District must issue a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP/Prior Written Notice) to document the proposed action, regardless of whether the student is found eligible.
- Allows the parent to agree or disagree with the District's determination
- Provides the parent the opportunity to accept or reject the proposed action in writing

Confidentiality of Information

The District maintains the confidentiality of all personally identifiable information in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state and federal laws.

Parents/guardians have the right to inspect and review their child's educational records and to request amendments to those records if they believe information is inaccurate or misleading.

The District will only disclose educational records to authorized individuals with a legitimate educational interest or with written parental consent, unless disclosure is otherwise permitted or required by law under FERPA.

The District will inform parents/guardians when personally identifiable information is no longer needed to provide educational services. Upon request, the District will destroy such information; however, a permanent record of the student's name, address, phone number, grades, attendance, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may be maintained without time limitation.

Contact Information

To request an evaluation or obtain additional information, contact:

Dr. Amber H. Dean
Director of Student Services
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5651

Additional information is available on the District website.

Section 504/ Chapter 15

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and applicable state and federal laws, Highlands School District provides eligible students with disabilities the accommodations, aids, and services necessary to ensure equal access to and participation in educational programs, services, and extracurricular activities, without discrimination or cost to the student or family.

The District has an obligation to identify, locate, and evaluate students who may be eligible for Section 504 services. Eligibility is based on the presence of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Parents/guardians who believe their child may be eligible may request an evaluation at any time by contacting their child's school or the District's Section 504 Coordinator.

Parents/guardians will be provided with notice of their rights under Section 504, including the right to participate in the evaluation and planning process, review educational records, and utilize grievance or due process procedures.

Additional information is available on the district website. Questions or concerns may be directed to the Section 504 Coordinator:

Dr. Michele Welter
724-226-2440 ext. 5658

Gifted Education and Chapter 16

Highlands School District provides specially designed instruction to students identified as mentally gifted in accordance with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The District maintains procedures to identify and evaluate students who may be eligible for gifted services. Parents/guardians may request a gifted evaluation at any time.

Eligibility for gifted services is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process conducted by a Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT), using multiple sources of data to assess a student's educational needs.

For students who qualify, a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) is developed by a team that includes school personnel and the student's parent/guardian. The GIEP outlines goals and specially designed instruction based on the student's unique needs.

Parents/guardians are provided with required notices, including the right to participate in meetings, review records, and pursue due process procedures.

Questions or concerns may be directed to:

Dr. Amber Dean
724-226-2440 ext. 5651

Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents/guardians of elementary and secondary students certain rights regarding the conduct of surveys, the collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical examinations.

These rights include the right to:

- Inspect, upon request, any survey or evaluation that concerns one or more of the following protected areas:
 - Political affiliations or beliefs
 - Mental or psychological problems
 - Sex behavior or attitudes
 - Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
 - Critical appraisals of close family members
 - Legally recognized privileged relationships
 - Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs
 - Income, other than as required by law
 - Receive prior notice and the opportunity to opt their child out of:
 - Surveys collecting information in the protected areas listed above
 - Activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing or sale
 - Certain non-emergency, invasive physical examinations or screenings

Parents/guardians may inspect relevant materials and exercise opt-out rights by contacting their child's school.

Notification of Rights Under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents/guardians and eligible students (students age 18 and older) certain rights with respect to student education records. These rights include:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within forty-five (45) days of a request
- The right to request the amendment of education records believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of privacy rights
- The right to provide written consent before the disclosure of personally identifiable information, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent
- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with FERPA requirements

The district may disclose "directory information" without prior written consent unless a parent/guardian or eligible student has advised the district in writing to withhold such information. Directory information may include items such as the student's name, address, telephone listing, email address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in activities and sports, weight and height of athletic team members, dates of attendance, grade level, and awards received.

To request access to records, request an amendment, or opt out of directory information disclosure, parents/guardians or eligible students should contact the district.

All student records are maintained and protected in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations. Additional information is available on the district website or upon request.

Homebound Instruction

In accordance with Pennsylvania regulations (22 Pa. Code § 11.25), Highlands School District may temporarily excuse a student from school attendance due to verified physical, mental, or other urgent reasons. Temporary excusals are granted upon receipt of satisfactory documentation and are limited to a period not to exceed three (3) months. "Urgent reasons" are strictly defined and do not permit irregular attendance.

Students who are temporarily excused may be provided with homebound instruction when the absence is expected to last at least ten (10) school days. Homebound instruction requires certification from a licensed physician or qualified mental health provider(a licensed professional authorized to diagnose and treat mental or behavioral health conditions) identifying the student's condition and expected duration of the confinement.

All homebound requests are reviewed by the District and must be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the School Board. Homebound instruction may not exceed three (3) months unless approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students receiving approved homebound instruction may be counted for attendance purposes.

The District maintains policies and procedures outlining the responsibilities of both the school and the student during periods of temporary excusal and homebound instruction. These include expectations for participation, completion of assigned work, and communication with school staff.

In accordance with 22 Pa. Code § 11.41, Highlands School District maintains written policies regarding attendance, admission, excusal, and program procedures. These policies are distributed annually to parents/guardians through the student handbook and are available on the district website.

For additional information or to request a homebound application, please contact your child's school or:

Dr. Amber H. Dean, 724-226-2440 ext. 5651

Title IX Information

The Highlands School District does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, ancestry, genetic information, or other legally protected categories in its educational programs, activities, or employment practices. The announcement of this policy is by State Law, including the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, and with federal law, including Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The district has established Title IX personnel to respond to concerns and sexual harassment and assault reports promptly. All investigations into sexual harassment and assault reports will be impartial, free of bias and conflicts, and will not prejudge the facts for either side. The district strives to maintain an environment where all students, staff, and the greater community feel safe.

Complaints or questions regarding nondiscrimination in school, the classroom, and employment should be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator, Highlands Administrative Center, PO Box 288, Natrona Heights, PA 15065.

Students Experiencing Homelessness

In compliance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as reauthorized in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Highlands School District continues to attempt to identify all children within the district who may be experiencing homelessness. If you know of families or individual students that may qualify for this service, please contact Dr. Cathleen Cubelic, McKinney-Vento Liaison, at (724) 226- 2400.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy

Highlands School District is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of all students, promoting healthy development, and safeguarding against the risk of suicide. In alignment with Board Policy 819, the District provides a comprehensive approach to suicide awareness, prevention, intervention, and response.

The District supports students through prevention education, early identification of risk factors and warning signs, and access to school-based and community resources. School personnel are trained to recognize and respond to concerns and to refer students for appropriate support.

Students may receive age-appropriate instruction on coping skills, resilience, and help-seeking strategies. When concerns arise, the District works collaboratively with families and appropriate support teams to ensure student safety and well-being.

Parents/guardians will be notified when concerns regarding a student's safety are identified, and the District may coordinate with community behavioral health providers to support students as needed.

Additional information and resources are available on the district website or upon request.

For questions or concerns, please contact:

ANNUAL NOTICE

SECTION 3—STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Highlands School District promotes a district-wide philosophy supported by procedures and policies that contribute to the promotion of a “RAMS for Life” attitude. We expect our students to be Respectful, Accountable, Motivated, and Safe in all school settings and throughout the community. The administration, teachers, and support staff explicitly teach these expectations, recognize students who demonstrate them, and provide guidance and support for students who struggle. A large portion of this philosophy depends on consistency, communication, and cooperation among all stakeholders.

One of the primary goals of Highlands Elementary School is to promote constructive, respectful behavior through proactive and restorative practices. The procedures and consequences outlined below are designed to teach appropriate behavior, repair harm, and support student growth rather than to punish. When behavioral concerns arise, students will be guided to reflect on their choices, understand the impact of their actions, and work toward restoring relationships and trust. Students are expected to take responsibility for their behavior, and building principals may address behaviors on a case-by-case basis. The following guidelines serve as a framework for behavior expectations throughout the school.

Students with Disabilities:

Disciplinary actions for students identified as eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 will be implemented in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The District will ensure that disciplinary decisions consider the student’s disability-related needs and that required procedures, including manifestation determination reviews when applicable, are conducted. The District will continue to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in accordance with the law.

CODE OF CONDUCT DEFINITIONS:

BULLYING

Children being bullied need and deserve adult intervention and help. Without intervention, the problem will not go away. Highlands School District’s definition of bullying is repeated and unwanted negative actions towards another child.

BULLY PREVENTION PROGRAM

In order to take a proactive approach to bullying, Highlands Elementary School implements the *Second Step Anti-Bullying Program* to teach students how to **recognize, report, and refuse** bullying behaviors. Instruction is provided to students in grades 1–4 and is designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible, effective problem-solvers and communicators, while promoting a safe, respectful, and caring school environment.

BUS MISCONDUCT

Bus transportation is a privilege. Video cameras are installed on all Highlands buses. Video recordings will be reviewed periodically by building principals to ensure the safe and orderly transport of students.

Misbehavior on a school bus or van may result in the removal of the student from the vehicle for severe or continuing offenses. Building principals have the right to address behaviors on a case-by-case basis. The following course of action serves as a framework for consequences. With a bus suspension, parents/guardians must provide transportation to and from school. Absence from school on a day of bus suspensions will result in an illegal absence. Parents/guardians will be notified of bus misbehavior.

- 1st offense- written warning, review of bus expectations
- 2nd offense- 1-3-day bus suspension
- 3rd offense- 4-10-day bus suspension
- 4th offense- 45-day bus suspension
- 5th offense- removal from the bus for the duration of the school year

CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC ITEMS-See Appendices

The Highlands School Board authorizes student possession of cell phones and other personal electronic devices, such as calculators, laptop computers, handheld computers, cameras, mobile phones, tablets, or any other devices designed to communicate, create, or store information. While the district does not prohibit bringing these devices to school, the district does not recommend it. Students assume all risks of damage, theft, loss, or misuse of such devices.

- ❖ Students ***must*** turn off their electronic devices upon entering the building. They must be kept in a book bag/locker.
- ❖ Students are prohibited from posting pictures and/or negative comments about other students/staff during school time (this includes the bus ride to and from school). Failure to comply with this directive will result in disciplinary action.
- ❖ ***Irresponsible use of cell phone technology and/or electronics will result in disciplinary action and confiscation of the device.***

CAFETERIA MISCONDUCT

Inappropriate behavior in the cafeteria, including, but not limited to, failure to clean up after themselves, throwing/spilling food, getting out of their seat without permission, and using unsafe voice levels.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM

Deliberate copying of another person's work or providing your work to another student. Students will receive a zero for the assignment.

DEFIANCE AND LACK OF RESPECT

Students who fail to respond to adult requests, say "no", ignore, or act out are demonstrating defiance and or lack of respect.

DRUGS/ALCOHOL/TOBACCO - See the District Policy

FIGHTING / PHYSICAL ALTERCATION/ ASSAULT

A physical altercation is an unsafe physical act, such as pushing, kicking, or shoving.

A fight occurs when two or more students engage in physical altercations, such as hitting, punching, or kicking. If a child chooses to retaliate, they have chosen to participate in the fight.

An assault is defined as a violent physical or verbal attack intended to injure another person.

The difference between an assault and a fight is that in an assault, the victim does not participate or retaliate.

HARASSMENT

Harassment includes derogatory racial, ethnic, and/or sexual remarks and personal intimidation.

INAPPROPRIATE/PROHIBITED MATERIALS

Items including but not limited to: cell phones, Pokémon or other trading cards, open containers, gaming and electronic devices, pornography, fireworks, matches, shell casings, toy weapons, etc.

LEAVING THE BUILDING

Leaving the school building or grounds without permission is a serious safety violation and will result in disciplinary action. Parents/guardians and law enforcement will be notified immediately.

PROFANITY / INAPPROPRIATE/ ABUSIVE LANGUAGE

The use of profanity and/or abusive or inappropriate language will not be tolerated. Profanity involves vulgar speech and/or actions. Abusive language involves ethnic, religious, racial, and/or sexual slurs. Inappropriate language includes substitute curse words and put-downs.

THEFT

A student has passed on, is responsible for removing someone else's property, or has signed a person's name without that person's permission.

THREATS

Threats are defined as an act or a reference to do bodily harm. Threatening another student or staff member verbally or physically is intolerable and is considered severe.

VANDALISM

Vandalism is the damage and/or defacing of school property. The standard repair and maintenance of school equipment and buildings is a costly item in the school budget. When school property is damaged or destroyed through vandalism, it is inconvenient for students and staff of the affected building and places an unfair burden on the taxpayer. Parents are financially responsible for the cost of repair or replacement if the damage has been done deliberately.

WEAPONS - See District Policies

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES - See District Policies

CODE OF MISCONDUCT AND RESPONSE STRUCTURE

The examples outlined in this Code of Conduct are not intended to be an exhaustive list of behaviors that may result in disciplinary action. The misconduct and response framework includes four levels, which represent a continuum of behaviors based on the severity of the incident and the frequency with which it occurs, as determined by school administration. Students are expected to avoid the behaviors listed as examples at each level and to demonstrate appropriate conduct at all times. Any student found to be in violation of Board Policy or District rules and regulations will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Level 1 Behaviors

Level 1 Definition	Examples of Level 1 Misbehaviors Include, but are not limited to:	Examples of Disciplinary Actions, but not limited to:
Misbehavior on the part of the student that impedes orderly classroom procedures or interferes with the orderly operation of the school. Individual staff members usually handle these behaviors, but sometimes require the intervention of other school support personnel.	• Classroom/school disturbance or disruptive/inappropriate classroom/school behavior • Non-defiant failure to complete or carry out directions/Off-Task Behavior • Bringing Bluetooth speakers, cell phones, cameras, and other electronic devices without authorization • Failing to have or return required forms, books, library books, materials, and equipment • Littering • Loitering • Running or shouting in the halls • Unauthorized presence in the halls or other school areas • Inappropriate display of affection • Unauthorized sale of non-harmful items • Classroom tardiness and first offense class cut • Lying • Name calling • Violation of dress code • Inappropriate language • Misuse of restroom time	• Private conversation with a student • Verbal warning or written reprimand (ex., reminder of classroom expectations that are posted/shared in the classroom) • Re-teaching/modeling desired behavior • Denial of privileges • Confiscation • RAMS Reflection • Seat change in the classroom or on the bus • Meeting with a counselor • Call to parent/guardian

Level 2 Behaviors

Level 2 Definition of Behaviors	Examples of Level 2 Misbehaviors Include, but are not limited to:	Examples of Disciplinary Actions, but not limited to:
Frequent or serious misbehavior that disrupts the learning environment of the school. These infractions, which usually result from the continuation of Level I misbehaviors, may require the intervention of administrative personnel because the execution of Level I disciplinary actions has failed to correct the situation.	• Extreme Level I misconduct • Continuation of Level I misconduct • Abusive, obscene, or disrespectful language, writing, or gestures • Using forged notes or excuses • Unsafe/disorderly bus or cafeteria conduct • Violation of school attendance policies (e.g., tardiness; truancy; leaving school property without permission; 2nd offense cutting class; unexcused absence) • Failure to serve detentions • Unauthorized possession or use of school property, facilities, or lockers • Hazing • Bullying/Cyberbullying • Plagiarism/Cheating • Misbehavior during field trips or school programs • Open defiance of authority; willful refusal to do as ordered; or any form of insubordination • Repeated violation of dress guidelines • Inappropriate use of electronic devices • Using, installing, or downloading unauthorized software (i.e., games, music, pornography, etc.)	• Parent contact • Parent/Student/Teacher conference • Behavior contract • Modified day • Denial of privileges/extra-curricular activities • RAMS Reflection • Out-of-school suspension • Confiscation • Seat change in the classroom or on the bus • Temporary removal or permanent removal from the bus or the area

	• Horseplay (unsafe acts such as pushing, shoving, running, jumping, etc.) • Verbal harassment of others • Possession of any article that is disruptive to the school day • Leaving the room without permission	
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Level 3 Behaviors

Level 3 Definition of Behaviors	Examples of Level 3 Misbehaviors Include, but are not limited to:	Examples of Disciplinary Actions, but not limited to:
Frequent or severe misbehaviors that tend to disrupt the learning climate of the school and/or acts directed against persons or properties that endanger the health or safety of others in the school.	• Continuation of or extreme Level II misconduct • Vandalism • 3rd offense truancy • Theft/Stealing • Instigation • Fighting • Assault • Minority, ethnic, or racial slurs or intimidation • Trespassing on or in school property when closed • Intimidating others • Hazing • Bullying/Cyberbullying • Sexting or any inappropriate material on any electronic or cellular device. • Destruction of the property of others • Lewdness or indecent exposure • Possession or use of tobacco, matches, e-cigarettes, lighters, vapes, vaping material, etc. • Harassment • Sexual harassment • Spitting on individuals or property • Inappropriate use of electronic devices • Throwing objects that can cause harm or damage. • Gross disrespect towards staff members.	• Parent Contact • School conference • Confiscation • Temporary removal from the area (i.e., class, cafeteria, etc.) • RAMS Reflection • Out-of-school suspension • Denial of privileges/extra-curricular activities • Temporary removal or complete removal from the bus • Restitution of property or damages • Referral to the police or the district magistrate • Citation

Level 4 Behaviors

Definition of Level 4 behaviors	Examples of Level 4 Misbehaviors Include, but are not limited to:	Examples of Disciplinary Actions, but not limited to:
Frequent or severe misbehaviors that tend to disrupt the learning climate of the school. Acts directed against persons or property that could or do pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of others in the school. Such acts will require administrative action, which could result in the immediate removal of the student from school and the possible intervention of law enforcement authorities.	● Extortion or attempted extortion ● Bomb threat or threatening phone calls ● Possession/use/transfer of dangerous weapons ● Assault ● Lighted or ignited objects ● Theft or possession/sale of stolen property ● Arson or attempted arson ● Hacking, cracking, or tampering with the network/computers ● Inappropriate use of electronic devices ● Transfer/sale/possession/purchase/procurement/distribution/use or under the influence of unauthorized substances, e.g., drugs, alcohol, or drug paraphernalia ● Possession, sale, or use of firecrackers, cherry bombs, or other fireworks ● Disorderly conduct ● Unauthorized use of the fire alarm or equipment ● Other violations of federal, state, or local laws ● Terroristic threats ● Terroristic acts ● Repeated incidents of bullying/cyberbullying ● Retaliation against a student for reporting bullying or extortion, or for assisting in an investigation	● Expulsion ● Citation ● Confiscation ● RAMS Reflection ● Out-of-school suspension ● Permanent removal from the bus ● Restitution for damages to or loss of property ● Referral to the police or the district magistrate ● Referral to an outside agency

SECTION 4—PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Children are most successful in school when families take an active role in their education. Highlands Elementary School values strong partnerships between home and school and encourages families to be involved in a variety of meaningful ways. Parent and family involvement may include the following efforts:

Parenting:

Families support student success by ensuring regular attendance, helping students arrive at school or the bus stop on time, notifying the school when a child is absent, supporting homework completion, celebrating student achievements, reinforcing school expectations, and attending school events such as Back-to-School Night and parent-teacher conferences.

Communicating:

Effective involvement includes two-way communication between home and school. This may include submitting absence excuses, signing homework planners, contacting teachers with questions or concerns, returning school communications, and keeping emergency contact information up to date.

Volunteering:

Families are encouraged to support the school community by participating in the PTO or assisting with school-wide activities and events.

Home Learning:

Families can support learning by reviewing classwork and homework with their child, discussing what they are learning, and working with teachers or tutors when additional academic support is needed.

Decision Making:

Parents are encouraged to participate in school and district decision-making by attending Title I meetings, serving on PTO committees or boards, and collaborating with other families to support school improvement efforts.

Community Collaboration:

Families are invited to participate in family literacy activities and community events held at the school, local library, and other community locations. These partnerships help strengthen connections between students, families, and community organizations.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parents can schedule conferences with teachers and principals. In addition, the district has scheduled several parent-oriented events throughout the year when parents can exchange ideas and get information concerning the schools and their children.

A day in November is scheduled for Parent-Teacher Conference Day, held at all schools in the district. The purpose of this day-long event is to allow parents to become acquainted with all of their children's teachers and to receive information on student potential, performance, and achievement early in the school year. In addition, Back to School Nights are scheduled in September at each school.

Since time limits at these events prohibit lengthy discussions on serious problems, parents are invited to make appointments in advance to discuss issues at a time convenient for both parties.

PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The administrators and faculty of Highlands Elementary School welcome the activities and efforts of the school's parent-teacher organization (PTO), which provides benefits to our children in the form of materials, equipment, and special programs and events. It also allows parents to become more familiar with the school. PTO meetings are held at the community center. The dates and times will be posted on the Highlands website, www.goldenrams.com, PTO Facebook page, and also in the PTO newsletter.

VOLUNTEERS

Highlands School District welcomes parents and community members into the District as volunteers. The District believes it is essential to include the community in its mission to build foundations for the futures of our students. Many programs, extracurricular activities, events, and experiences would not be possible without the graciousness of volunteers. The District anticipates a cordial relationship with you, as a volunteer, and thanks you for your time and dedication to our youth.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING:

- Minimum of 18 years of age, unless the volunteer is a high school student in a peer-mentoring position.
- Adhere to all regulations, policies, and procedures of the Highlands School District.
- Maintain confidentiality when volunteering within the schools.
- Provide State Criminal Record Check and State Child Abuse clearances, as well as FBI clearance or Arrest / Conviction Form, dependent upon the period of residency in Pennsylvania.

Information about how to obtain the necessary clearances is posted on the school website at www.goldenrams.com/volunteer

TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

The Board recognizes that parental involvement contributes to the achievement of academic standards by students participating in Title I programs. The Board views the education of students as a cooperative effort among the school, parents/guardians, and community.

2. Authority 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6318

In compliance with federal law, the district and parents/guardians of students participating in Title I programs shall jointly develop and agree upon a written parental involvement policy. When developing and implementing this policy, the district shall ensure the policy describes how the district will:

1. Involve parents/guardians in the joint development of the district's overall Title I plan and the process of school review and improvement by conducting monthly building and/or district PAC meetings attended by parents, teachers, administrators, and Board members.

2. Provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing practical parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance, including assistance in understanding state academic content and performance standards, state and local assessments, and requirements of Title 1.

3. Develop activities that promote the schools' and parents'/guardians' capacity for strong parental involvement by fostering an atmosphere of open communication and cooperation.

4. Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies with appropriate programs, as provided by law, including information on how to work with business partners and other community organizations to learn about Title 1 and to encourage school/family/community partnerships.

5. Involve parents/guardians in an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the policy in improving the academic quality of schools served under Title I through explanation and discussion of policy details.

6. Identify barriers to participation by parents/guardians who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority, and find ways to strengthen outreach.

7. Use findings of annual evaluations to design strategies for more effective parental involvement that will be implemented throughout the district as appropriate.

8. Involve parents/guardians in the activities of schools served under Title I. 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6318. The Board shall adopt and distribute the parental involvement policy, which shall be incorporated into the district's Title I plan and shall be evaluated annually, with parental involvement.

3. Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the district's Title I parental involvement policy, plan, and programs comply with the requirements of federal law. The building principal and/or Title I staff shall provide to parents/guardians of students participating in Title I programs:

1. Explanation of the reasons supporting their child's selection for the program.

2. Set of objectives to be addressed.

3. Description of the services to be provided.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that information and reports provided to parents/guardians are in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents/guardians can understand.

4. Guidelines 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6318

An annual meeting of parents/guardians of participating Title I students shall be held to explain the goals and purposes of the Title I program. Parents/Guardians shall be allowed to participate in the design, development, operation, and evaluation of the program. Parents/Guardians shall be encouraged to participate in planning activities, to offer suggestions, and to ask questions regarding policies and programs. In addition to the required annual meeting, additional parent/guardian meetings shall be held at various times of the day and evening. At these meetings, parents/guardians shall be provided:

- Information about programs provided under Title I.
- Description and explanation of the curriculum in use, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
- Opportunities to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children.
- Opportunities to submit parent/guardian comments about the program at the district level.

If sufficient, Title I funding may be used to facilitate parent/guardian attendance at meetings through payment of transportation and child care costs. Opportunities shall be provided for parents/guardians to meet with the classroom and Title I teachers to discuss their child's progress. Parents/Guardians may be given guidance as to how they can assist at home in the education of their child. Whenever Title I parents/guardians are involved in the planning, review, and improvement of the district's educational programs and require transportation, child care, home visits, or other services to participate, related expenses may, at the district's discretion, be paid from Title I funds. The goal of our partnership is to develop programs, activities, and procedures collaboratively, airing differences as needed to increase the capacity for parental involvement for all families in the district.

Right to Amend Handbook:

The contents of this handbook are intended to provide students and parents/guardians with the necessary information regarding school policies, procedures, and expectations. Please note that the administration

reserves the right to amend, modify, or update the handbook at any time as necessary. In the event of such changes, families will be notified.

ELEMENTARY STUDENT APPLICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL TOUR OR TRIP ([Board Policy #204](#))

Part 1: To be completed by a parent or guardian.

Student's Name _____ **Student #** _____ **Telephone** _____

Address _____ **Zip Code** _____

School _____ **Grade** _____ **Homeroom Teacher** _____

Travel destination/temporary address _____

Date(s) student will be absent from school _____

Were prior requests granted during the school year? ____ **Yes** ____ **No** **Dates** _____

Please explain the purpose of the trip or tour _____

Itinerary _____

Adult(s) accompanying the student _____

Reason trip cannot be taken when school is not in session _____

I hereby request that the above student be excused from compulsory attendance during this period of absence. I assume responsibility for supervising the completion of all assignments/responsibilities which are to be submitted upon his/her return to school or within a reasonable period, as designated by his/her teacher(s).

Date _____ Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Part 2: To be completed by the student's teachers and signed by the parent or guardian.

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Comment/Assignments</u>	<u>Due Date</u>

I have reviewed the teacher's comments and again give my approval.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Part 3: To be completed by the building Principal. Please check one: _____ Approved _____ Disapproved

Reason for disapproval _____

Signature of Principal _____ Date _____

Educational Tour or Trip

Please refer to [School Board Policy #204](#)

Request for Excuse

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student who wishes to have the student excused from compulsory school attendance to participate in an educational tour or trip must submit an application to the Principal of the school in which the student is enrolled. Except for emergencies, which must be fully explained, this request must be submitted at least one week before the date on which the student seeks to be excused for compulsory attendance. If a student is absent for more than ten (10) school days, the student will be removed as a full-time student. The family will need to re-enroll the child upon return.

Administrator's Discretion

The Principal of the school shall exercise discretion whether to excuse the student from compulsory attendance. Consideration shall be given to the length of the tour or trip, the number of requests made during the school year, and whether the educational tour or trip is likely to advance the academic growth of the student. It is the practice of Highlands School District to discourage excused absences for educational tours or trips during the school year.

Assignments

Upon request by a parent, guardian, or student, teachers shall submit a list of student assignments for the period of absence during an approved educational tour or trip. Assignments/responsibilities may be made either before the absence or upon return to school. All assignments to be completed shall be submitted to the teacher(s) upon return to school or within a reasonable period designated by the teacher(s).

Return to School

The student shall return to school on the first scheduled school day after the excused absence or date previously specified by the building Principal.

Implementation

This policy is designed for implementation at the building level. Frequent recurrence of requests for educational tours or trips during a school year shall result in disapproval, although the requested trip may be meritorious. This policy is designed to foster better school/student relationships and avoid excessive absences.

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

Policies and latest revisions are also available on <https://www.goldenrams.com/domain/588>

[103 Discrimination/Harassment Affecting Students](#)

[200: Enrollment of Students](#)

[204: Attendance](#)

[209.1: Food Allergy Management](#)

[209.2: Diabetes Management](#)

[210.1: Possession/Administration of Asthma Inhalers/Epinephrine Auto-Injectors](#)

[218: Student Discipline](#)

[220: Student Expression/Dissemination of Materials](#)

[222: Tobacco and Vaping Products](#)

[226: Searches](#)

[227: Controlled Substances/Paraphernalia](#)

[229: Student Fundraising](#)

[233: Suspension and Expulsion](#)

[236.1: Threat Assessment](#)

[246: School Wellness](#)

[247 \(with attachments\): Hazing](#)

[249: Bullying/Cyberbullying](#)

[252: Dating Violence](#)

[719: Therapy Dogs in School](#)

[806: Child Abuse](#)

[810.2: Transportation-Video/Audio Recording](#)

[815: Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers, and Network Resources](#)

[824: Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries](#)