

HILLSDALE LOCAL SCHOOLS STUDENT HANDBOOK K-6



DISTRICT CENTER

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Welcome

Welcome to Hillsdale K–6! We are so glad to have you as part of our school family. Our faculty and staff take great pride in providing a well-rounded educational experience in a safe, warm, and caring environment where every child is known, supported, and encouraged to take flight.

At Hillsdale K–6, we are dedicated to preparing students for their next steps in life by focusing on the development of the whole child. Through engaging classroom instruction, hands-on learning, and meaningful co-curricular and extracurricular experiences, we help students build confidence, curiosity, and a love of learning. Strong partnerships with families and our community are essential to this work, and we truly value your involvement as we guide students to become active participants in their education and to take flight in their own unique ways.

Our staff is committed to continuous improvement and innovative instruction. Hillsdale is a Google school, and students regularly use tools such as Google Classroom, Docs, and other digital resources to enhance learning and collaboration. We also implement a strong Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to encourage positive choices, responsibility, and respect. Our curriculum is aligned with state standards and supported by instructional practices designed to meet students where they are and help them grow, learn, and take flight.

We encourage families to take an active role in their child's education and to become familiar with this handbook, which outlines important policies, procedures, and expectations for the school year. By working together, we can help every student develop confidence, character, and the skills they need to soar.

At Hillsdale Local Schools, we are proud to be Building Character – Expecting Excellence, as we help our students take flight every day.

Go Falcons!

Mr. Williams
PK–6 Principal

Mission, Vision, Motto



Hillsdale Mission

Focused on success through innovation, empowerment, and collaboration.

Hillsdale Vision

In partnership with the community, we build character and expect excellence by providing a safe and challenging environment that prepares students to be successful in life.

Hillsdale Motto

Building Character – Expecting Excellence

Contact Information

- **Main Office:** 419-368-4364
- **Address:** 479 Township Road 1902, Jeromesville, OH 44840
- **District Website:** www.hillsdalelocalschools.org
- **Principal (Grades K–6):** Mr. Tom Williams – *Email:* twilliams@hillsdalelocalschools.org
- **Preschool Director:** Mrs. Becky Hartsel – *Email:* bhartsel@hillsdalelocalschools.org
- **School Counselor:** Mrs. Kendal Gable – *Email:* kgable@hillsdalelocalschools.org
- **School Secretary:** Mrs. Angie Sigler – *Email:* asigler@hillsdalelocalschools.org

(To leave a voicemail for any teacher, call the main office and the secretary can connect you to the teacher's extension. A full staff directory is available on the district website.)

Academics

At Hillsdale Elementary, we are committed to providing a high-quality education aligned with Ohio's Academic Content Standards. We also believe in developing the whole child, not just academically, but also socially and emotionally. Here we outline key academic policies and expectations.

Academic Integrity (Honesty in Schoolwork)

We expect all students to do their own work and to always be honest in completing assignments and tests. Cheating or plagiarism (copying someone else's work or ideas) is taken seriously even at the elementary level, because it's a matter of honesty and learning. We understand young students are still learning these concepts, so teachers will treat instances as learning opportunities, but there may be consequences for academic dishonesty.

Examples of cheating or plagiarism:

- Copying a classmate's answers on a worksheet or test.
- Letting someone copy your work. (Both students are accountable in this case.)
- Using information from a book or the internet in an assignment without giving credit (for older students who do research projects, teachers will show how to credit sources appropriately to avoid this).
- Taking someone else's essay, report, or project (or having a parent or sibling do your work) and presenting it as your own.
- Looking at notes or an unauthorized "cheat sheet" during a quiz/test.
- Preparing to cheat (for example, writing answers on your hand or programmable device ahead of time).
- Using technology dishonestly, e.g., using a calculator when not allowed

Consequences: If a teacher believes a student has cheated or plagiarized, they will speak with the student about it to understand what happened. In most cases:

- The teacher will inform the parent/guardian and also notify the principal about the incident.
- The principal or teacher may assign a consequence, especially for repeated offenses or very serious cheating.

Our goal is to help students learn from mistakes. For a first incident, it might be handled mostly between the teacher, student, and parent/guardian (for instance, a talk about why it's wrong). If cheating happens again, it may become a disciplinary matter. We want all students to learn integrity; doing the right thing even when no one is watching. As students get older, instances of cheating or plagiarism can have serious academic consequences (and in higher education or jobs, they can be career-ending). So it's best to build honest habits now. Always try your best, even if an assignment is hard. It is better to attempt it and maybe not get everything right than to copy and get a perfect score the wrong way. We are here to help if you're struggling; there's never a need to cheat.

Accessing Grades (ProgressBook)

ProgressBook is our online portal for parents/guardians and students to view grades, assignments, and attendance. At the beginning of the school year, any family that is new to the district (or those who haven't yet created an account) will receive a registration key and instructions to set up a ProgressBook account. Once your account is set up, you can login at any time to see your child's up-to-date grades and any missing assignments. We highly encourage parents/guardians to use this tool and to even enter an email address in your ProgressBook profile – this way, if you forget your password, you can reset it via email. (If no email is on file and you forget the password, you would need to call the school for a reset.)

Students in grades 4–6 also get their own ProgressBook login so they can take responsibility in checking their grades and completion of work. This is a great way for students to learn self-management. If you experience any issues with ProgressBook or lose your login info, please contact the school office.

English Language Learners (ELL)

If a student's primary language at home is not English and they need assistance developing English proficiency, we offer support for English Language Learners. The district will evaluate such students and provide either in-class accommodations or pull-out instruction by a qualified ELL tutor, depending on the child's level. We also provide translated documents and interpreter services for families as needed to ensure communication is clear. Please inform us if a language other than English is mainly spoken at home so we can support your child appropriately.

Grading and Report Cards

Grading Scale (Grades K–3)

In kindergarten through third grade, students do not receive traditional letter grades. Instead, they are evaluated on skill development using a number system:

- 3 – *Met* the standard/skill (proficient for their grade level)
- 2 – *Progressing* toward the standard/skill (developing, but not there yet)
- 1 – *Limited progress* (needs significant improvement or not yet demonstrating skill)
- No Mark – Not assessed at this time (the skill/content was not covered in that grading period)

Teachers will explain this standards-based report at conferences. The goal is to show parents/guardians how their child is progressing on specific foundational skills.

Grading Scale (Grades 4–6)

Starting in 4th grade, we use a more traditional letter grading scale for core academic subjects, along with corresponding percentages and grade point equivalents:

- A = 94–100% (Grade Point 4.0) – Excellent
- A– = 90–93.9% (3.7)
- B+ = 87–89.9% (3.3)
- B = 83–86.9% (3.0) – Good
- B– = 80–82.9% (2.7)
- C+ = 77–79.9% (2.3)
- C = 73–76.9% (2.0) – Average
- C– = 70–72.9% (1.7)
- D+ = 67–69.9% (1.3)
- D = 63–66.9% (1.0) – Below Average (but passing)
- D– = 60–62.9% (0.7)
- F = 59.9% and below (0.0) – Failing

Teachers determine grades based on a combination of classwork, homework, projects, quizzes/tests, and participation. Final yearly grades for grades 4–6 are typically the average of the four quarter grades (each grading period is approximately equal weight).

Homework

Homework is an important part of learning, as it reinforces skills and teaches responsibility. The amount of homework will vary by grade level: younger students may have simple tasks like reading with a family member or a small math worksheet, whereas older students (5th–6th) will have more regular assignments in various subjects. Each grade level team will communicate their specific homework expectations at the start of the year (often in a syllabus or welcome letter).

General guidelines and expectations:

- Homework is not meant to be overwhelming. We follow the general rule of thumb (about 10 minutes of homework per grade level per night, not counting independent reading). If homework is taking an excessive amount of time or causing stress, please communicate with the teacher so adjustments can be made.

- Homework is expected to be completed on time and turned in when it's due. Students should do their best, but it's okay (especially in the lower grades) if they need some help. The key is that they attempt each assignment.
- If a student forgets or fails to complete homework, consequences will follow according to the grade-level policy. For example, repeated missed homework may result in a working recess. The purpose is not to punish but to ensure students catch up on learning and understand that meeting deadlines is important. Teachers will inform parents/guardians if a study session is assigned for missing work.
- We encourage parents/guardians to provide a consistent time and quiet place for your child to do homework each day. Check their planner or folder nightly, especially in early grades, to help them develop good habits.
- While we want students to do their own work, parents/guardians can definitely support by explaining instructions or guiding your child through a tough problem. Just avoid doing the work for them. It's important we see what the student can do independently. If your child is consistently struggling with homework, please talk to the teacher.

Gifted Services

Students who show exceptional academic aptitude may be identified as gifted based on Ohio's assessment criteria (for instance, scoring in the 95th percentile or above on approved tests). In our elementary, we might provide enrichment opportunities or differentiation in class for gifted learners. We also have a Gifted Intervention Specialist who may work with identified students, particularly in upper elementary, either by providing advanced materials, special projects, or small group enrichment. Some of the clubs and competitions (like Power of the Pen, advanced math challenges, etc.) also serve to challenge our high-achievers.

If your child is identified as gifted, you will be notified and we will create a Written Education Plan (WEP) outlining how their needs will be met (though we do not have self-contained gifted classes at the K–6 level). We strive to keep advanced learners engaged and growing just as we do for those who need remediation.

Honor Roll & Academic Recognition (Grades 4–6)

We love to celebrate our students' academic achievements! For students in grades 4 through 6, we have an Honor Roll system each quarter:

- Scholar Roll: Students who earn *all A's* (90% or above in every subject) in a grading period.
- Honor Roll: Students who earn *all A's and B's* (80% or above in every subject) in a grading period.

Students who achieve these honors will be recognized, for example, by having their names posted in the school newsletter or hallway and possibly at an awards assembly if one is held.

For our 5th and 6th graders, we also have an opportunity to earn the Academic Letter "H" Award by the time they finish middle school. This program is meant to encourage consistent academic excellence. To earn the Academic "H", a student must maintain at least a 3.7 GPA in each core subject each year in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. This award is actually given at the end of 8th grade (since it includes performance in 7th and 8th), but we mention it now so that 5th and 6th graders know the importance of building good academic habits early. Students on track will be informed and recognized accordingly.

Other awards may be given for Perfect Attendance, citizenship, or improvement as determined by the school. We believe in recognizing not just top grades, but also hard work, improvement, and positive contributions to the school community.

Intervention (Title I & Support Teachers)

Not all students learn at the same pace, and that's okay! We have Intervention Specialists and Title I teachers who provide extra support to students who may need a boost in certain skill areas.

- **Title I Program:** Hillsdale K–6 receives federal Title I funds, which we use to support reading instruction. Based on assessments, some students are identified for reading intervention groups. If your child qualifies, a reading teacher will work with them in a small group setting to target specific skills (such as phonics, comprehension, fluency) a few times a week. This could happen during a designated intervention period or even during a portion of their regular reading time. These groups are flexible; students move in and out as their needs change. Parents/Guardians will be notified if their child is receiving Title I services and the Title teachers will be available at conferences to discuss strategies to help at home.
- **Intervention Specialists (Special Education):** If a student has been identified with a disability and has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), our intervention specialists provide the accommodations or specialized instruction required (whether it's in inclusion with the regular class or in a resource setting). They collaborate with classroom teachers to support students in meeting their IEP goals. Even students without formal IEPs might work with the intervention specialist for extra help in some cases through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process.

Our philosophy is that every child can learn; some just need different approaches or more time. We do not view intervention as something “negative”, but another way to ensure growth. If your child is struggling academically, we will communicate with you and possibly convene an intervention assistance team meeting to brainstorm support strategies. You can also request in writing an evaluation if you suspect your child may need special education services. We follow all legal procedures for evaluations and IEPs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Parent-Teacher Conferences & Communication

Strong communication between home and school is key to student success. We schedule Parent-Teacher Conferences typically once in the fall, around October, and once in late winter, around February/March. During these conferences, you'll meet with your child's teacher(s) to discuss progress, strengths, and any concerns, and to set goals together. We will send notes home with sign-up instructions as those dates approach. We encourage 100% participation in conferences, because they are invaluable for sharing information and supporting your child as a team.

Outside of formal conference days, parents and teachers are encouraged to communicate whenever needed. You can call or email your child's teacher to request an individual meeting if you have questions or concerns about your child's performance or well-being. Teachers may also reach out to schedule additional conferences if they feel it is necessary. Meetings can often be arranged before or after school, or during a teacher's planning period by appointment. Never hesitate to contact us; no concern is too small when it comes to your child's education.

Additionally, keep an eye on weekly newsletters or notes from teachers, as well as the school's website and communications for ongoing updates about classroom learning and events.

Progress Reports & Report Cards

Hillsdale operates on a quarterly grading period (4 quarters in the school year). Report cards are issued at the end of each quarter. We utilize an electronic gradebook system called ProgressBook (ParentAccess) where report cards can be viewed online and printed. About a week after a quarter ends, report cards will be available on ProgressBook. If you need a paper copy sent home, please notify the teacher or office. Additionally, teachers will keep grades up to date in ProgressBook and parents are encouraged to check it regularly to monitor their child's grades and progress (login information is provided at the start of the year. Contact the office if you need assistance).

Student Responsibility for Learning

Students and families are expected to take ownership of education. Teachers will do their best to make lessons engaging and to support each student, but success ultimately requires effort from the student and family as well. All Hillsdale K–6 students should:

- **Be prepared:** Come to school each day ready to learn. This means having your homework done, your books and supplies in your backpack, and a good night's sleep so you can focus.
- **Try your best:** Listen carefully in class, follow directions, and ask questions if you don't understand something. We encourage curiosity! If something is confusing, raise your hand or speak to the teacher – we are here to help.
- **Stay engaged:** Participate in class activities and discussions. Being actively involved helps you learn more and makes class more fun for everyone.
- **Be respectful:** Respect your teachers, classmates, and yourself by following classroom rules and treating others kindly. A respectful, positive attitude helps create a classroom where everyone can learn.
- **Stay organized:** Especially for older students (grades 4–6), keep track of assignments and due dates, use your assignment notebook, and manage your time well. This is a skill that will help you as you move on in school. If you are involved in activities or sports, learn to balance those with schoolwork.

Teachers will provide extra help when you need it; you just have to ask. We offer intervention periods and other support if you find yourself struggling. Education is a team effort: students, teachers, and parents working together. We believe every student can learn and grow, and we're here to ensure that happens.

Textbooks and Supplies

Textbooks and workbooks are provided by the school for student use. Textbooks are expensive and reused each year, so students are expected to handle them with care. Please do not allow your child to write or draw in textbooks. If a textbook is accidentally damaged or starts to come apart, let the teacher know so it can be repaired quickly. If a textbook is lost or willfully destroyed, a fine will be assessed for replacement.

Students should come to class with basic supplies as requested by the teacher (e.g., pencils, notebook, folder, etc.). At the elementary level, teachers often stock extra supplies for when students run out, but it's good for students to learn to be prepared. A supply list is typically provided at the start of the year. If obtaining supplies is ever a hardship, please discreetly inform the teacher or school counselor. We have resources to help ensure every child has what they need.

School devices (Chromebooks/Tablets): Students will have access to a device for educational use. The use of school devices is a privilege; treat the device carefully, follow the teacher's rules for handling it, and only use it for school-related tasks. Any damage beyond normal wear may result in a fine if negligence is determined.

By respecting books, devices, and materials, students show responsibility and help our resources last longer for everyone's benefit.

Administrative Information

Address and Contact Updates

Please notify the school office immediately of any changes to your child's address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, custody arrangements, or parent/guardian email. It is vital that we have current contact and medical information in case of emergencies. Parents can update information through the district's online forms system (FinalForms) and by informing the school secretary. Keeping this information up-to-date ensures we can reach you quickly when needed.

Concerns and Complaints

We are committed to addressing student and parent concerns promptly and fairly. If you or your child have a concern about a classroom or school situation, we encourage you to first discuss it with the staff member most directly involved, such as the teacher. Most issues can be resolved with a respectful conversation at this level. If the issue isn't resolved or if it's more serious, you may then contact the building principal to discuss the concern further. The principal will investigate the situation and work with you toward a solution. Our goal is to ensure everyone's concerns are heard and resolved appropriately. We value open communication with our families.

Custody and Court Orders

If there are custody arrangements or court orders that affect your child (such as custody agreements, restraining orders, or guardianship papers), the custodial parent/guardian must provide the school with a current certified copy of the court order. We are legally obligated to follow the most recent court orders on file. Without a court order, the school *must* presume that both parents have equal rights of access to the child and information. Please also inform the principal if a custody case is pending that could impact school release or contact permissions. All custody information will be kept confidential and shared only with staff who need to know for the student's safety (Board Policy JEC). It is the parent's responsibility to keep the school updated with any new or modified court orders.

Directory Information & Student Privacy

In accordance with Ohio law (ORC 3319.321) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), certain basic student information is considered "directory information." Hillsdale Local Schools defines directory information to include a student's name, parents' names, home address, telephone number, date of birth, grade level, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, awards and honors received, and (for athletics) possibly weight/height. This information may be released publicly (for example, in yearbooks, honor roll lists, class rosters, sports programs, or local news stories) without prior consent *unless* a parent/guardian notifies the school in writing that they do not want some or all of this information released. If you do not want your child's name or other directory information made public, please notify the principal in writing at the start of each school year. We will honor all opt-out requests.

Separately, during the school year, students may occasionally be photographed or mentioned in school communications, such as on the school's website, social media, newsletters, or local newspapers highlighting school events and achievements. If you do not wish your child to be photographed or named in school publications or media, please contact the school office. We respect your privacy preferences and will ensure your child is excluded from any public-facing materials if you request. *(If no objection is made, we will assume consent to use your child's first name and/or photo for positive school news and displays.)*

Student Records: Educational records are protected by FERPA. Parents/guardians have the right to inspect and review their child's education records and request corrections of any inaccurate or misleading information. Except for directory information as noted above, the school will not release personally identifiable information from student records without written consent, unless required by law or court order. If you have questions about student records or privacy, please contact the principal.

Emergency Medical Authorization (EMA)

Each year, parents/guardians must complete an Emergency Medical Authorization form (usually through FinalForms) as required by Ohio law (ORC 3313.712). This form provides vital information about your child's medical conditions, doctor contacts, and emergency instructions (including permission for emergency treatment if needed). Students cannot attend field trips or certain activities without an EMA on file. It is crucial to keep this information current. If phone numbers, medical conditions, or doctor information change, please

update your FinalForms and inform the school immediately. In an emergency, we will refer to the EMA to contact you and, if necessary, to ensure your child receives appropriate medical care.

Emergency School Closings & Delays

If inclement weather or another emergency requires a school closing or delay, the district will issue notifications via our automated text system and will post announcements on local radio/TV stations and the district website. We aim to make decisions and announcements by 6:30 AM whenever possible. Please ensure your contact information is up to date so you receive these alerts. On a delayed-start day, all schedules (including bus pick-up times and school start times) will be pushed back by 2 hours (unless otherwise announced). In the event of an early dismissal due to weather or emergency, we will use the same notification channels to reach families. If you feel it is not safe for your child to be transported to the school due to the weather, please alert the office, and the absence will be excused. Safety is our top priority, and we appreciate your flexibility during these situations.

Extracurricular Activities and Clubs

In addition to academics, we may offer extra-curricular activities to enrich students' school experience. Participation in these activities is optional but encouraged, as it helps students explore interests and develop skills like teamwork and leadership.

All school rules and code of conduct expectations apply during any extracurricular activity or event. Students must maintain good behavior and satisfactory grades to participate. If a student is struggling academically or behaviorally, participation may be limited until improvement is shown (this is to ensure that schoolwork comes first).

We are always looking to expand opportunities. If enough students show interest in a new club and we have a staff sponsor, we will consider adding it. We encourage students to get involved! It's a great way to "take flight" beyond the classroom.

Note: Elementary sports teams are typically community-run or through recreation leagues, as school-sponsored athletics start in 7th grade. However, 5th/6th graders may have opportunities like youth basketball, etc., often outside the school. Good sportsmanship and our school behavior expectations still apply whenever students represent Hillsdale.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and eligible students (18 or older) certain rights regarding educational records:

- **Right to Inspect and Review:** You can inspect your child's education records (academic files, test scores, discipline records, etc.). Contact the principal to arrange a time. We will fulfill the request within a reasonable time (no more than 45 days).
- **Right to Request Amendment:** If you believe something in the record is inaccurate or misleading, you can request in writing that we amend it. If the request is denied, you'll be informed and have the right to a hearing.
- **Right to Consent to Disclosures:** We will not disclose personally identifiable information from records without consent, except in certain allowed cases (like to other school officials with legitimate interest, or if the student enrolls in another school, or specific law exceptions like compliance with a subpoena, health/safety emergencies, etc.). Directory information (as defined earlier) can be released without consent unless you opt out.
- **Right to File a Complaint:** If you feel the district is not complying with FERPA, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office.

Essentially, we guard student privacy closely. Educational records are confidential. There are some instances where law (e.g., court orders or agency requests) requires us to share information, but otherwise, we need your permission.

Field Trips

Field trips are exciting opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom. Throughout the year, your child's class may take field trips to various educational destinations (museums, nature centers, local businesses, etc.) that enrich the curriculum. A permission slip with details will be sent home in advance for each trip. In order for a student to participate, a parent/guardian must sign and return the permission form by the specified deadline. Sometimes, a field trip may require a small fee to cover costs (such as admission); information on any cost and how to pay will be included in the permission slip.

Field trips are privileges and come with the expectation that students will represent Hillsdale well by following school rules and demonstrating good behavior and safety awareness. We want every student to be able to participate; however, students who have shown serious or repeated behavior problems, poor attendance, or significant missing work may lose the privilege of joining a trip. Such decisions are made by the teacher team and principal, and we would communicate with the parent in advance if there were a concern. For example, if a student has been frequently disruptive or unsafe at school, we must consider safety on the trip. In some cases, a parent might be asked to attend as a chaperone for their child as a condition of going, or the student might remain at school with an alternative assignment if it's deemed too risky for them to go.

Our goal is for field trips to be safe, educational, and fun for all. We welcome parent chaperones on many trips. If you're interested and available, please let your child's teacher know (and ensure you have volunteer clearance on file). Chaperones must focus on supervising our students (younger siblings typically should not come along so our attention is on the class). All students on a trip must ride the school-provided transportation to and from the venue unless otherwise arranged (for instance, a parent might sign their child out from a field trip site to leave directly, but you must communicate with the teacher). While on the trip, students must stay with their group and follow all instructions from teachers, chaperones, and guides.

We believe field trips greatly enhance learning by providing real-world connections, and we appreciate your support in making them successful. If cost or other circumstances ever prevent your child from being able to participate, please talk to us, so we can work to find a solution so no child misses out due to hardship.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students who are experiencing homelessness have the right to a free and appropriate public education. This includes students who are staying with others due to hardship, living in shelters, motels, vehicles, or other temporary housing. Eligible students may enroll in school immediately, continue attending their school of origin when it is in their best interest, and receive needed support such as transportation and access to school programs. Families and students needing assistance or more information should contact the school counselor, building principal, or the district liaison for confidential support.

Nondiscrimination and Disability Rights

Hillsdale Local School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. We are committed to providing equal access to education for all students. If you believe your child has been discriminated against or denied opportunities, please contact the school principal or district compliance officer.

For students with disabilities, we follow all requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If your child has a disability that substantially limits a major life activity (like learning), they may be eligible for a 504 Plan with accommodations. If they qualify for special education under IDEA, they will have an IEP. Parents have the right to be involved in these processes, to

consent to services, and to resolve disputes through due process if necessary. Please refer to the Notice of Procedural Safeguards (available from the special education department) for detailed rights.

Parent Involvement and Communication

We consider parents/guardians as partners in education. Aside from formal conferences and meetings, we invite you to be involved in our school community. Here are some ways:

- **Join the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)** : We have an active PTO, and participating is a great way to support school events, fundraisers, and share input. Notices about PTO meetings or family events will be sent home.
- **Volunteer**: Volunteers are welcome (after a background check has been approved). You might help in the classroom, library, or during special events and field day. Please inquire in the office as to the steps required to get a background check and clearance to volunteer.
- **Regular Communication**: Read the classroom and school newsletters that come home (either on paper or email). Check your child's homework folder or agenda nightly. We also encourage use of teachers' email or the classroom based apps used, for quick communication. Following the school's Facebook page or website can also keep you informed.
- **Addressing Concerns**: If you ever worry about something (academic progress, a bullying issue, etc.), reach out sooner rather than later. We want to solve small problems before they become big ones. Teachers are usually the first contact for classroom issues; the principal is available for broader concerns or if further help is needed.

When parents and school communicate well and work together, students benefit the most. Thank you for being an active participant in your child's education!

Parents' Bill of Rights (HB 8) and Communication

Ohio's House Bill 8 emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in children's education and well-being. In line with this, our school's policy is to maintain open communication with parents/guardians about important issues affecting their child. We will not encourage or coerce a child to withhold information from their parents. If a student shares something concerning (regarding their mental or physical health, for example), staff will typically encourage the student to talk to their parent and, when appropriate, we will contact the parent as well. The only exception is if there is a concern of child abuse or neglect by the parent; in those cases, school personnel are mandated to report to Children's Services first, and guidance on notifying the parent is taken from there. Outside of such situations, please know that we consider you, the parent, our partner and will keep you informed. You have the right to know about and guide your child's upbringing, education, and health.

Safety

Emergency Preparedness: The school has a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan for various scenarios (weather emergencies, intruders, etc.). Staff are trained on these procedures. In case of an emergency, communication to parents will be through the district automated system and possibly local media. It is crucial that parents do not all rush to the school in certain emergencies, as it can impede first responders. Instead, wait for instructions on where/when reunification will occur if needed. We hope never to have a serious incident, but being prepared is part of maintaining safety.

We conduct regular safety drills throughout the year to keep students and staff prepared for emergencies (in compliance with state laws and regulations):

- **Fire Drills**: When the fire alarm sounds, students must immediately stop what they are doing and exit the building quietly and in an orderly line following their teacher's instructions and the posted evacuation routes. Classes gather at designated spots a safe distance from the building so teachers can take attendance. We practice fire drills to ensure everyone knows how to get out quickly and safely. Tampering with fire alarms or failing to follow drill procedures is taken very seriously (and can result in disciplinary action and/or legal consequences, as false alarms are against the law).
- **Tornado/Severe Weather Drills**: During a tornado drill announcement or siren, students will move to the tornado shelter, which is also the auxiliary gymnasium. The goal is always to get to the first floor

and away from windows (at our school, often the interior halls or designated areas in the building). These drills teach students where to go and what to do if severe weather occurs.

- **Safety/Lockdown Drills:** In a lockdown drill, students practice staying quiet and out of sight (for example, moving away from doors and windows, and following teacher directions such as turning off lights and remaining still). The purpose is to prepare for any situation where we need to secure the building (such as a stranger or threat in or near the school). Teachers will explain these procedures in a calm, age-appropriate way. We often coordinate with local law enforcement for these drills. Students are encouraged to take all drills seriously and behave appropriately.

Our staff will review and teach these safety procedures, and we welcome parents to discuss the importance of drills with their children. There will be time after drills to address any questions or feelings students have.

Safety is a shared responsibility; knowing what to do in an emergency can save lives.

School Fees and Fines

Each year, students are assessed a school fee to help cover the cost of workbooks, art supplies, and other consumable materials used in the classroom. The fee amount is set by the Board and will be communicated at the start of the year. Fees can be paid anytime after the first day of school (checks can be made payable to Hillsdale Local Schools or payments made via the school's online payment system at Pay Schools Central). We ask that fees be paid by the end of the first grading period (9 weeks). Fee Waivers: If your family qualifies for free lunch under federal guidelines, the student's instructional fees may be waived. Please contact the office for information or if you receive a notice that appears incorrect.

Students are expected to take care of school property. Textbooks, library books, and devices are loaned to students and must be returned in good condition. If an item is lost or returned with damage beyond normal use, the student may be assessed a fine to cover repair or replacement. For example, lost or damaged textbooks and library books will be charged at the cost of repair or replacement. The principal, media center specialist, and teachers will determine fair fine amounts as needed. Additionally, if a student causes damage to school property or equipment (including defacement of walls, damage to desks, technology, etc.), the student or their parent/guardian will be responsible for the cost of cleaning, repair, or replacement. The school may arrange a payment plan if necessary. Intentional vandalism or destruction of property may result in disciplinary action. We encourage students to take pride in our building and materials.

Title IX (Sexual Harassment)

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school program or activity. This includes sexual harassment. The district has a Title IX Coordinator (contact information is on the district website) to handle any complaints. Sexual harassment can be student-to-student or staff-to-student and includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a student's education or creates a hostile environment. While elementary kids are young, issues can still arise (like inappropriate touching, or repeated crude comments). Any such incidents should be reported and will be investigated promptly. The district has formal grievance procedures for Title IX complaints, which will be provided to anyone who comes forward with a concern.

Visitors and Security

All visitors must report to the K-6 office upon entering the school. Visitors will sign in and receive a visitor's badge. For everyone's safety, our building remains locked during school hours; visitors must use the buzzer at the main entrance after 8:00 AM to gain entry. Staff may ask for identification before allowing entry. We appreciate your understanding as we work to keep our school secure.

Volunteers

Parent and community volunteers are a valued part of our school community. From helping in classrooms, assisting at events, to chaperoning field trips, volunteers greatly enhance our students' experience. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the principal or your child's teacher for opportunities. For the safety of

our students, all volunteers who work directly with children (even occasionally) must complete a background check. The school office can provide information on how to complete this process. Volunteers shall sign in at the office and wear a visitor/volunteer badge while in the building. We truly appreciate the gift of your time and talents to help our students succeed!

Withdrawal or Transfer of Students

If you will be moving out of the district or otherwise withdrawing your child from Hillsdale, please notify the school office at least one week in advance of the student's last day. This allows us to prepare necessary records and help make your child's transition smoother. The office will provide you with a withdrawal form to fill out. Before leaving:

- All school materials (textbooks, library books, devices, etc.) must be returned.
- Any outstanding fees, fines, or lunch charges should be paid.
- Teachers will sign the withdrawal form and confirm the student's current grades and that materials are returned.

Once the new school requests your child's records, we will promptly forward transcripts and records *provided that* all obligations to Hillsdale have been met. If obligations are not met (for example, lost books are unpaid), the district may withhold records until the issues are resolved, which can delay enrollment at the new school. Our goal is to ensure a smooth transition, so please reach out if you have any questions about the process.

Attendance

Regular attendance is critical for academic success and is required by Ohio law. We encourage students to be present every day unless they are truly ill or there is a significant emergency. The following policies align with Board Policy JED and Ohio's compulsory attendance laws.

Absences

If your child will be absent from school, a parent/guardian must call the school office before 8:30 AM on the day of the absence to inform us of the reason. Call the main office at 419-368-4364 to report the absence. If we do not hear from you, school personnel are required by law (ORC 3313.205) to contact a parent/guardian that same morning to verify the child's whereabouts and reason for absence. We will attempt phone calls (and may use email if we cannot reach you by phone). This is to ensure your child is safe. Upon returning to school, please send a written note (or email) signed by a parent/guardian stating the dates of absence and the reason, especially if you did not speak directly with office staff on the day of absence. Written documentation is required for our records.

Excused Absences

The State of Ohio and the Board of Education define excused absences as absences due to acceptable reasons. Excused absences include:

- Personal illness or injury of the student (if over 3 days, the school may request a doctor's note).
- Illness or incapacitation of a family member where the student's presence at home is necessary.
- Death of a relative – absences up to 3 days for a death in the immediate family are generally excused (additional time may be granted by the principal in special circumstances).
- Medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours (a doctor's note should be provided upon return).
- Quarantine of the student or house by health authorities.
- Religious holidays or events consistent with your family's sincerely held religious beliefs.
- Emergencies or other circumstances as deemed acceptable by the superintendent or principal.
- Pre-approved family travel or enrichment activity – In rare cases, absences for travel or special events can be excused *if* approved in advance by school administration. Parents should submit a written request explaining the educational value of the trip. (Generally, we discourage vacations during school

time. If a trip must occur, please notify us as early as possible. Teachers may provide assignments, but they are not required to re-teach material missed due to vacations.)

If your child is absent, they will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. It is the student's responsibility (with parent support for younger children) to check with teachers about assignments missed during an absence. As a guideline, for each day of excused absence, the student has one additional day to complete make-up work. Teachers may make exceptions or provide alternate deadlines as needed, especially for extended illnesses.

Half-Day Absences

If a student arrives late after 9:30 AM or leaves for the day before 1:30 PM, it will count as a half-day absence.

If your child has a medical appointment and will arrive late or leave early, please provide a note in advance if possible. When picking up your child during the school day for an appointment, you must sign them out at the office. If someone other than a parent/guardian will pick up the child, that person's name should be in our records or provided by note/phone call, and they must show ID at pick-up.

We will not release a student to any individual who is not a parent/guardian or listed emergency contact without verification and parental permission.

Unexcused Absences

An absence is considered unexcused if it does not meet one of the approved reasons under Ohio law or if required documentation is not provided. Examples of unexcused absences include: oversleeping, family vacations not approved in advance, missing the bus regularly, or staying home to babysit. Additionally, if a student is suspended out-of-school, those days are recorded as unexcused absences (though school work can still be completed for credit). Any work missed during an unexcused absence still should be completed so the student does not fall behind, but teachers are not obligated to grant full credit for this make-up work (they often will, especially for younger students, but this is at the teacher's discretion). The important thing is the student learns the missed material.

We want to work with families to avoid unexcused absences. If you're facing challenges getting your child to school, please communicate with us so we can help.

Make-up Work: If a student is absent, they will be given appropriate time to make up assignments. For extended absences, parents can request homework from the teacher (please allow a day's notice for teachers to gather materials). Also consider checking ProgressBook or Google Classroom (if used) for posted assignments when your child is out. Students are responsible for turning in make-up work; parents of younger kids, we appreciate your help in organizing this.

Tardiness (Arriving Late)

Students are expected to arrive on time each morning. The school day begins at 8:00 AM. A student is considered tardy if they are not in their classroom by 8:00 AM. A parent should accompany a late-arriving student to the office to sign them in and provide a note explaining the reason for tardiness. If a student is late due to a medical appointment, please provide the doctor's note for an excused tardy. Oversleeping or car trouble are not considered excused reasons for being late.

Frequent tardiness disrupts your child's learning and the classroom. If a student accumulates 5 or more tardies in a semester, the principal will address the issue. Consequences for excessive tardiness may include parent contact and lunchtime detentions to make up missed time. Continued excessive tardiness (e.g., 10 or more) may result in additional detentions or other interventions. Our goal is to work with families to ensure students start the day on time and ready to learn. If you're struggling with morning routines, let us know; we might be able to help with ideas or resources.

Truancy & Excessive Absences

Ohio law defines “excessive absences” and “habitual truancy” and requires schools to take specific actions when students miss too much school, even if some absences are excused. Our aim is always to partner with families to improve attendance before it becomes a legal issue.

- **Excessive Absences**

When a student misses 38 or more hours in one school month or 65 or more hours in a school year, with or without excused reasons, the school will notify the parents in writing of the concern. This is roughly equivalent to about 6 days in a month or 10 days in a school year. Even if these are excused absences, we want to work with you to avoid a pattern that could harm the child’s education. We may request a conference to discuss how to improve attendance or if any support is needed.

- **Habitual Truancy**

This is defined by Ohio Revised Code as a student missing 30 or more consecutive hours of school (approx. 5 days in a row), 42 or more hours in a month (approx. 7 days), or 72 or more hours in a school year (approx. 12 days) without a legitimate excuse. If a child reaches the threshold for habitual truancy, the school is required to take further steps. We will form an Absence Intervention Team (including school staff and the parent/guardian, and possibly a counselor or social worker) to develop an Absence Intervention Plan to help the student improve attendance. This plan may involve strategies like counseling, attendance contracts, make-up time, etc., tailored to the student’s situation. The team will make multiple attempts to involve the parent/guardian in this process. It’s critical that we work together, as continued unexcused absences after the plan is implemented can lead to the school having to file a complaint in Juvenile Court. We absolutely want to avoid legal action by solving attendance problems collaboratively.

Please be aware that under Ohio law, if a student is habitually truant and attendance does not improve despite interventions, the school must refer the case to Juvenile Court (typically after 60+ days of an intervention plan not succeeding).

In summary, make school attendance a priority. If your child is struggling with school refusal, anxiety, or any issue impacting attendance, contact us as early as possible. We are here to help. Consistent attendance helps children keep up with learning and feel connected socially. We understand that illness and special situations happen; just keep communication open with us. Together, we can ensure your child gets the most out of their elementary years.

Health and Wellness

The well-being of our students is a top priority. This section covers health and safety policies.

- **Illness at School:** If a student becomes sick or injured during the day, they will be sent to the school clinic/nurse. We will evaluate their condition and, if needed, contact the parent/guardian to pick them up. It’s important we have your current phone numbers for this reason. Students who have fever over 100°F, are vomiting, or have other potentially contagious symptoms will be sent home. They should be symptom-free, without medication, for 24 hours before returning.
- **Communicable Disease Policy:** We follow guidelines from public health authorities for communicable illnesses (like flu, strep, pinkeye, COVID, etc.). If there is a serious communicable disease case in the school, we will notify parents as appropriate (protecting privacy) and provide instructions. We appreciate parent cooperation in reporting illnesses and keeping children home when they are sick.
- **Allergies:** If your child has a significant allergy (food allergies, bee stings, etc.), please ensure this is documented on their health forms. We do have protocols for allergies: e.g., peanut-free lunch tables if needed, staff trained on EpiPen use, etc. Communicate with the nurse and teacher about any

epinephrine injector or other emergency meds your child may require. Those should be supplied to the nurse with proper documentation.

- **Wellness:** Our school promotes healthy habits. We encourage students to stay hydrated, to eat balanced meals, and to get physical activity (through recess and P.E.). We ask that if you send in treats for birthdays or parties, please make sure they are nut-free.

Communicable Diseases and Illness

If your child is diagnosed with or suspected of having a communicable disease (for example, chickenpox, strep throat, COVID-19, etc.), please inform the school office as soon as possible. Prompt communication helps us monitor and respond appropriately to protect other students and staff from the spread of illness. We will provide guidance on steps to take before your child returns to school (for instance, required clearance from a doctor in some cases). Keep sick children home if they have a fever, are vomiting, or show other signs of a contagious illness, and they may return after being symptom-free (without medicine) for 24 hours.

Immunizations

All students must have current immunization records on file, as required by Ohio law (ORC 3313.671 and Board Policy JHCB). Prior to starting school, and at certain grade intervals, children must show proof of required vaccines. The school nurse will review immunization records and notify parents/guardians if any required vaccines are missing. Students who are not in compliance with immunization requirements may be excluded from school per state guidelines until records are up-to-date or a valid exemption is provided. If you have questions about immunizations or need information on where to obtain them (e.g., health department clinics), please contact our nurse. This policy is in place to protect the health of all students.

Medical Services

Our school nurse is available during most of the school day to handle illnesses, dispense medication (with proper forms on file), and advise on health concerns. The nurse also coordinates with the local health department for screenings and immunizations. If your child has any health condition that might affect them at school (asthma, diabetes, seizures, etc.), please meet with the nurse to create a health care plan.

Medications at School

We understand that some students may need to take medication during the school day. For everyone's safety and to comply with Ohio law, strict procedures are in place (ORC 3313.713, Board Policy JHCD):

- **Prescription Medications:** A Medication Administration Authorization form must be completed and signed by both a licensed healthcare provider *and* a parent/guardian. This form, along with the medication in its original pharmacy container (labeled with the student's name, medication name, dosage, and timing), must be brought to the school office by a parent/guardian (please do *not* send medication to school with a student). The school nurse or authorized staff will keep the medication secure and administer it as directed.
- **Over-the-Counter Medications (OTC):** Students are not permitted to carry or self-administer any over-the-counter (non-prescription) medication (this includes items like Tylenol, cough drops, etc.). If your child needs an OTC medication during school hours, you must provide a completed parental permission form (available in the office) and deliver the medication to the office in its original packaging. The medication will be given by school personnel according to your written instructions.

All medications (prescription or OTC) must be stored in the office and dispensed by trained school staff or the nurse. Under no circumstances should a child have medication in their desk, bookbag, or on their person (with the exception of certain emergency medications like inhalers or EpiPens, which may be carried by a student *only* if a physician and parent have authorized a self-carry plan on file). The school will not dispense any medication without the proper forms on file, and we cannot supply any medication to students that is not provided by the parent. These rules are in place to prevent medication errors and to protect all students.

Injuries: Minor bumps and bruises can be treated with ice packs and band-aids in the clinic. If a more serious injury occurs, we will administer first aid and call parents. In an emergency, we will call 911 first, then parents (using the Emergency Medical Authorization instructions). There is usually no nurse present on the bus, at after-school sports, etc., so coaches and drivers are trained in basic first aid/CPR as well.

Insurance: The school does not automatically provide medical insurance for students. However, information on optional student accident insurance is sent home at the start of the year for those who wish to purchase it.

Nurse

The school nurse has many functions throughout the school year. The school nurse maintains student health records and oversees health screenings. During the year, students will receive routine screenings such as vision and hearing tests (required at certain grade levels), and checks for scoliosis as needed. The nurse also provides guidance on managing head lice outbreaks and ensures all immunization records are up to date per Ohio law (ORC 3313.67). If the nurse or health aide contacts you about a health concern (for instance, if your child becomes ill or injured at school, or is due for an immunization update), your prompt response is appreciated. Our health clinic handles first aid and will call parents to pick up children who are sick (fever, vomiting, etc.). Please ensure the emergency contacts on file know how to reach you in case your child needs to go home due to illness.

School Counseling Services

Our School Counselor is available to assist students with academic, social, or emotional needs. The counselor provides a variety of services, including:

- **Academic Support:** The counselor monitors overall student academic progress and can help coordinate services if a child is struggling significantly (for instance, recommending a Response to Intervention plan or evaluation for special education if needed).
- **Behavior Support:** For students who have behavioral challenges, the counselor might work on behavior plans, check-in/check-out routines, or mentor the child on making better choices.
- **Individual or Small-Group Counseling:** Students can talk with the counselor about problems such as difficulty making friends, dealing with a family change, managing feelings like anger or sadness, etc. These conversations are confidential (with the exception that the counselor would share with a parent or appropriate authorities if a child's safety is at risk). Typically, short-term counseling is provided; for ongoing therapy needs, the counselor can help families connect with outside agencies.
- **Liaison to Other Services:** Counselors can also direct families to resources like mental health services, community support (food/clothing assistance), or other programs.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Classroom lessons on topics like friendship skills, conflict resolution, empathy, and career awareness are sometimes led by the counselor.

Students can request to see the counselor by asking their teacher or coming to the office. Parents are welcome to call or email the counselor to discuss any concerns about their child. We all share the goal of helping your child succeed and feel happy at school.

School Day Procedures & Expectations

A successful school day isn't just about classes, but it's also about lunch, recess, hallways, and all the moments in between. We have school-wide expectations to ensure a safe, orderly, and positive environment throughout the day. Here are some key aspects of daily school life at Hillsdale:

Arrival/Dismissal and School Hours

Arrival and dismissal will take place at the PK-6 office entrance. Please use caution and watch for pedestrians crossing the street during arrival and dismissal. To ensure student safety, the back of the parking lot is closed to all other traffic during arrival and dismissal to allow for bus loading and unloading.

- **School Day:** 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM (student hours). Students may enter the building starting at 7:30 AM. Please do not drop off students before 7:30, as no supervision is available before that time. Upon arrival (between 7:30–7:55), students should go to the designated waiting area (typically the cafeteria/gym) where staff supervision is present. At 7:55 AM, students will be dismissed to homerooms to begin the day.
- **Tardy:** The bell rings at 8:00 AM. Students need to be in class by this time or they are considered tardy (see Attendance section for tardy policy). Late arrivals must sign in at the office.
- **Dismissal:** Students begin dismissal around 2:50 PM. Car riders are released to the front entrance pickup area; please follow the school's pickup line procedures and be cautious of children. Buses depart around 3:10 PM from the back of the building. If your child's end-of-day routine (bus vs. pickup) changes, remember to send a note that morning. If you need to pick up your child early for an appointment, you must sign them out in the office. For safety, we will only release to authorized individuals.

We appreciate your cooperation with arrival and dismissal rules, as they are designed for student safety and smooth operations.

Lockers and Personal Belongings (Grades 3–6)

Students in grades 3 through 6 are each assigned a locker in the hallway to store their coat, backpack, and school supplies. Lockers help keep classrooms less cluttered and give students a sense of responsibility for their own space.

Locker Guidelines:

- Keep your locker clean and organized. You should be able to easily find your books and materials when you need them. Do not leave food in your locker overnight (to avoid pests or odors, except maybe a packaged snack for the week).
- Do not share lockers or trade your locker with someone else. Use only the locker assigned to you. If there's an issue with your locker (it's jammed, etc.), ask the teacher or office for help.
- **Decorations:** You may put up a few personal items inside your locker like a small magnet or a schedule, but no stickers or permanent adhesives that could damage the locker. Do not attach anything to the outside of the locker without permission. Items like mirrors or picture frames that contain glass are not allowed (for safety).
- **Opening/Closing:** Close your locker door gently and completely (don't slam it). Never keep valuable items in your locker.

Lockers and Searches: Lockers are the property of the school, and students use them with the understanding that the school has the right to open and inspect lockers at any time (Ohio law, ORC 3313.20). Random locker checks may occur to ensure safety (for instance, checking for prohibited items). Students should have no expectation of privacy for items stored at school. As long as you aren't storing anything inappropriate or dangerous, you have nothing to worry about.

When to Use Lockers: Generally, students may go to lockers before school, before/after lunch, and at dismissal. Your teacher will let you know specific times you can access lockers (e.g., some teachers allow a locker break in the afternoon). Avoid going to your locker during class time unless you have permission, as this disrupts learning. Plan ahead and bring what you need to class so you don't have to ask to leave for your locker often.

Finally, remember that any damage to your locker (writing graffiti, dents from kicking it, etc.) may result in consequences and possibly a fine for repairs. Take care of your locker; it's part of our school facilities.

Lost and Found

It's easy to misplace things at school. Our Lost and Found area is located in the cafeteria. If your child loses a coat, lunchbox, water bottle, etc., have them check the lost and found. To prevent losses: Please label your

child's belongings – jackets, sweaters, backpacks, lunch boxes, even water bottles – with a last name. Labeled items are much more likely to be returned to their owner.

We periodically remind students to check the lost and found. Unclaimed items will be kept for a reasonable time. Unclaimed items at the end of each semester may be donated to a local charity. We will usually send out a notice or display the items before donating. The school is not responsible for lost personal items, but we will do our best to help kids find their belongings. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their things, such as double-checking they have everything before leaving a classroom or the bus. It's a good habit to learn early!

Lunch/Cafeteria

We operate a closed lunch period. All students eat lunch at school in our cafeteria (similar grades have staggered 30-minute lunch schedules). Students may either bring a packed lunch from home or buy lunch from the school cafeteria.

- **School Lunch:** A well-balanced hot lunch is available daily. As of this year, a student lunch costs approximately \$3.00 (this includes the main entree, sides, and milk). Breakfast is also available before school from 7:30–8:00 AM for about \$1.75. Extra milk or milk purchased alone costs about \$0.75. Menus are sent home monthly and posted on the website.
- **Payment:** You may send cash or a check to school to be added to your child's meal account, or use the online payment system (*PaySchools Central*) to load funds. We strongly encourage keeping a positive balance in your child's lunch account. In an emergency situation where a student forgets lunch or runs out of money, the cafeteria will allow the student to "charge" a standard lunch. However, charges are limited (approximately a week's worth of lunches). After that limit, the school will provide a basic meal but will expect prompt payment of the outstanding balance. We will send reminder notices for negative balances. Additional or à la carte items (like extra entrees, juice, or ice cream) cannot be charged; students must have funds at the time of purchase for those optional items.
- **Free/Reduced Lunch:** Families who may qualify for free or reduced-price meals should fill out the application at the beginning of each year (available on the school website or from the office). The application is confidential. If approved, your child will receive meals at no cost or a reduced price (in accordance with federal income guidelines). We encourage anyone who might qualify to apply.

Lunch Behavior: During lunch, students are expected to show good manners: remain seated while eating, talk quietly, and clean up after themselves. We have a peanut/nut-free table or area available for students with allergies; please instruct your child not to share food with others for everyone's safety. If a student forgets to bring a lunch, we will ensure they get a meal and simply charge the account. No child will go hungry.

After eating, students will be dismissed by tables to throw away trash and line up for recess or return to class. Misbehavior in the cafeteria (excessive noise, throwing food, disrespect to monitors) can result in assigned seating or other consequences. Let's make lunchtime enjoyable for all by being respectful and responsible.

Media Center (Library)

Our Media Center is a wonderful resource for students. All classes will have the opportunity to visit the media center regularly (often once a week) to check out books and learn library skills. We also use the media center for research projects and as a quiet study space at times.

- **Behavior:** The media center is a quiet zone. Students should use soft voices and be respectful of others reading or working. Follow the media aide or teacher's instructions. There is no food or drink allowed near the books/computers.
- **Book Selection:** Students may check out books for a specified period (usually 1–2 weeks). We encourage students to explore a variety of reading materials. If a book is lost or significantly damaged, families may be asked to pay a replacement fee, so please help your child take care of borrowed books.

- **Class Visits:** During your class's library time, the media center specialist may give a short lesson or read-aloud, and then allow students to browse and check out books. Pay attention during instructions so you know how many books you can borrow and when they are due back.

If a student does not follow media center rules or behaves inappropriately (for example, being loud or disruptive, mishandling books), the privilege of using the library may be suspended. The media center specialist will warn the student and then involve the principal if needed. We want the media center to be a welcoming place for all, which means everyone must do their part to keep it orderly and enjoyable.

Encourage your child to share the books they check out with you and to find joy in reading! Reading regularly at home is one of the best things for academic growth.

Recess & Playground

All students will have recess. Recess is an important time for kids to get exercise, socialize, and take a mental break. We want it to be fun and safe for everyone!

General recess expectations:

- **Be kind and inclusive:** Include others in games, take turns, and resolve conflicts peacefully. No rough play, tackling, or fighting will be allowed. Games like tag are fine as long as they don't get overly aggressive. If a game is getting too rough or someone could get hurt, teachers or aides will stop that activity.
- **Follow the rules of the playground:** We will teach students how to use all equipment safely (slides, swings, climbing structures, etc.). For example, go *down* the slide one at a time, feet first; no jumping off swings; no climbing on top of structures not meant for climbing. Use equipment the right way to avoid injuries.
- **Listen to recess aides:** We have staff supervisors outside during recess. Students should show them respect and follow their instructions just like they would for a teacher. If an aide calls freeze or blows a whistle (for example, when recess is over or if there's a safety issue), students should stop what they're doing and listen.
- **Safety first:** No throwing harmful objects (like rocks or wood chips). If a ball goes out of bounds (like into the parking lot or road), inform an adult. Do not chase it. If someone gets hurt, get an adult's help immediately.
- **Stay in designated areas:** Students must remain in the assigned playground area where staff can see them. Do not leave the playground or go back into the building without permission from a teacher/aide.

We reinforce our PBIS motto on the playground: for grades PreK–4, "Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Really Awesome!" (Grades 5–6 also follow "Be Respectful, Be Prepared, Be Engaged," which also applies to behavior.) That means at recess: take turns, use kind words, take care of equipment, and help others.

Recess is considered a privilege. If a student consistently makes poor choices at recess (for example, bullying others, disobeying rules, or endangering safety), they can be benched (asked to sit out) for a time or lose recess for a day. In chronic cases, the principal may take away recess for an extended period or require the student to have supervised indoor recess with an assignment. We do not like to withhold playtime unless necessary, so we will try other interventions first, but please note it as a possible consequence for misbehavior.

On the other hand, students who follow expectations contribute to a happy recess environment for all. We often praise or reward good behavior on the playground, sometimes through our Falcon Pride/PBIS incentives.

Weather and Recess: We go outside for recess whenever possible. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather (coat, hat, gloves in winter; boots if muddy or snowy; sneakers for running, etc.). We will stay indoors for rain or if the wind chill is extremely cold. When indoors, we will utilize the auxiliary gym and all recess and school rules still apply.

If your child needs to stay in from recess due to recovering from illness or injury, please send a note from home (or a doctor's note if it's for multiple days). Otherwise, all students will be expected to go outside and get some fresh air.

Restrooms

Students are expected to use restrooms properly and respectfully:

- During class, students should ask permission to use the restroom and use a hall pass. Only one boy and one girl from a class at a time (or as per teacher's rule) to avoid groups in the restroom during lessons. During recess or lunch, students should still ask an adult before going inside to use the restroom.
- Keep restrooms clean: Do not throw paper on the floor or make messes with soap or water. Always flush the toilet after use. If you encounter a problem (like a clogged toilet or no soap/paper towels), inform your teacher or the office so it can be fixed.
- Privacy and behavior: Respect others' privacy. There should only be one student per stall. No playing, yelling, or lingering in the restroom. Go, wash your hands, and return to class promptly.
- Vandalism or graffiti in restrooms is strictly prohibited. If a student is found writing on walls/partitions or damaging fixtures, it will result in disciplinary action and cleaning/repair costs.

We periodically have restroom breaks for younger classes to go as a group. Older students may go during passing times or as needed with permission. Misbehavior in restrooms (e.g., more than one student in a stall, playing around) may lead to loss of independent restroom privileges (meaning the student will have to be escorted or have supervised breaks). By taking care of our restrooms, we ensure a healthy environment for everyone.

Stairs and Hallways

Our school hallways are shared spaces by all grades. We expect quiet, orderly behavior in hallways so that classes in session are not disturbed:

- Walk (do not run) in the hallways at all times.
- Stay to the right side of the hallway when moving as a class or group, to allow others to pass.
- Use a quiet voice if you must speak; in most cases, classes will travel in "Level 0" (silent) or "Level 1" (whisper) in the halls.
- If you have permission to go somewhere on your own (office, restroom, etc.), go directly and return promptly. You should carry a hall pass or note from your teacher. No wandering or visiting other classrooms.

You may have some classes that require you to move to a different area. Our building is attached to the 7–12 side in some hallway connections. Students in K-6 are not permitted on the Grades 7–12 side of the building except when going to an assigned special or activity, and even then you should use only the route directed by your teacher. We want our older elementary students to develop responsibility when moving between classes: no loitering in hallways, and absolutely no visiting lockers or areas of older students without authorization.

The stairways and elevator have specific rules: Only use the stairs when you are going between floors for classes (for instance, music might be downstairs). No playing on the stairs or sliding on railings. The elevator is off-limits to students unless a student has an injury or disability that prevents stair use *and* has permission from the office to use the elevator (usually via an elevator pass). An adult must accompany any student on the elevator, or explicit permission must be given. Misuse of the elevator (using it without permission or for joyriding) will result in consequences.

Overall, hall traffic should be calm and quiet. This ensures safety (no one gets knocked down) and a good learning environment (classes nearby aren't interrupted).

Transportation Changes (Bus Notes)

At the start of the year, each family should establish a regular transportation routine for their child. Bus pick-up and drop-off locations must remain consistent each day (morning and afternoon locations can differ, but day-to-day they should stay the same to avoid confusion). If your child normally rides the bus but will be picked up by car on a certain day, please send a written note to the teacher or office *that morning* to let us know. Please avoid last-minute verbal changes over the phone for end-of-day plans. To ensure a smooth start to the school year, transportation schedule changes are not permitted during the week before school begins or during the first week of school.

For a permanent change to your child's daily transportation (new pick-up or drop-off location), please contact the district transportation director and update the information in FinalForms. Allow a few days for the new arrangements to take effect. If someone other than a custodial parent/guardian will be picking up your child, the school must have a written note in advance naming that person, their relationship to the student, and the date/time of pickup. These measures are in place to ensure student safety.

Water Bottles and Snacks

Water Bottles: Students are permitted (and encouraged) to have a water bottle at school to stay hydrated, especially in warm months or after P.E. The water bottle should have a secure, spill-proof lid (to avoid spills on desks or books) and should contain water only (no juice, soda, etc., unless part of a special event or directed by a doctor). Teachers will establish appropriate times for drinks so it's not disruptive (usually between lessons or at designated break times). Please clearly label the bottle with your child's name. We also have water fountains and filling stations available.

Snacks: In lower grades, teachers may schedule a short snack time. If so, they will inform you of guidelines (usually asking for healthy snacks like fruit, crackers, etc.). Snacks should be peanut-free if there are allergies in the class. Students should not be eating snacks outside of designated snack time (to keep our school clean and allergy-safe).

Chewing gum is generally not allowed at school (unless a teacher or aide gives special permission or it's part of a specific program/reward). Gum can make messes in carpets and under desks, so we ask that gum stay at home.

Student Conduct and Discipline

Hillsdale Local Schools is committed to providing a safe and orderly environment where all students can learn. We have a Student Code of Conduct that all students are expected to follow. Discipline at the K–6 level focuses on teaching students right from wrong, helping them learn from mistakes, and age-appropriate consequences when rules are broken. We also emphasize positive behavior (through our PBIS program, as mentioned earlier) to encourage and reward good choices.

Code of Conduct Overview

Ohio law (ORC 3313.661) gives schools the authority to make reasonable rules and expect students to behave. The Code of Conduct applies on school grounds, on school buses, and at any school-sponsored events (field trips, assemblies, after-school activities, etc.). It even can apply to off-campus behavior if it has a direct effect on the school or other students' safety and well-being.

In general, students are expected to be honest, respectful, and safe. Behavior that violates the rights or safety of others, disrupts the learning environment, or breaks a law or board policy will result in disciplinary action.

Here is a summary of prohibited behaviors (this is not an exhaustive list, but covers the major categories):

- **Academic Misconduct:** Cheating, plagiarism, or forgery (falsifying signatures or notes) is considered a violation of conduct. Lying to staff or giving false information is also included here.

- **Bullying and Harassment:** Bullying is repeated unwelcome behavior toward another student that can be verbal, physical, or cyber (online), and that creates an intimidating or hostile environment. Harassment could be based on someone's race, gender, appearance, or other personal attributes and includes things like name-calling, cruel teasing, or spreading rumors. Any form of bullying or harassment is not tolerated. Students who engage in bullying may face consequences, and we will work to educate them to stop the behavior. We encourage all students: if you see bullying, or if you are a victim of bullying, tell a teacher or the principal immediately. We have a responsibility to investigate and address the behavior. There will be no retaliation permitted against someone who reports bullying.
- **Disrespect and Insubordination:** Students must follow the directions of any school staff the first time given. Refusing to comply with instructions, talking back in a rude manner, or ignoring a staff member's request is considered insubordination. We expect students to respond to correction without arguing. If you feel something is unfair, you or your parents can discuss it later with the teacher or principal, but in the moment, you need to cooperate.
- **Disruptive Behavior:** This covers anything that substantially interrupts learning or school operations. For example, continuous class interruptions, making loud noises or actions in the halls, setting off false alarms, etc. This also includes complicity, which is encouraging or provoking others to break rules (e.g., cheering on a fight, or a group planning to skip class) and is also subject to discipline.
- **Electronic Misconduct:** Using technology inappropriately, such as visiting forbidden websites, cyberbullying, or using personal devices against the rules, is a violation. This also includes taking photos or videos of others at school without permission, which is not allowed due to privacy rules.
- **Fire/Explosives:** Setting a fire or bringing explosives (like fireworks, smoke bombs, etc.) to school is extremely dangerous and prohibited. Even "playful" actions like lighting a match or causing a small fire in a trash can will result in serious consequences.
- **Hazing:** Any act that is meant to embarrass, demean, or cause harm to another student as some kind of "ritual" is forbidden (and is illegal).
- **Inappropriate Materials:** Do not bring to school any material that is inappropriate for children (such as pornography, or vulgar images, or dangerous items as mentioned above). Also, avoid wearing or displaying anything with inappropriate language or symbols.
- **Other Conduct:** Any other behavior that school officials deem inappropriate or detrimental to the good order, safety, or welfare of the school and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- **Theft or Property Damage:** Respect school property and others' belongings. Do not steal, and do not vandalize (write on desks, break things, etc.). Parents/Guardians may be responsible for costs of damage and stolen items must be returned or paid for. This also includes misuse of technology (e.g., intentionally damaging a Chromebook or trying to hack into school systems).
- **Threatening or Dangerous Behavior:** This includes bullying, harassment, intimidation, or any act that could cause others to feel unsafe. It also includes bringing any object that could be used as a weapon, look like a weapon, or pretending to have a weapon. Weapons of any kind, even look alike weapons, are strictly forbidden; this includes firearms, knives, pocket knives, or look-alike/toy weapons that could be mistaken for real weapons. Possession of a real weapon may lead to immediate removal from school and likely a suspension or expulsion, as well as involvement of law enforcement.
- **Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs (Controlled Substances):** The use or possession of these substances is *illegal* for minors and absolutely prohibited at school. This includes cigarettes, vaping devices (e-cigarettes), chewing tobacco, alcohol of any kind, and any drugs or look-alike substances not prescribed for the student. Even though elementary students are young, we mention this rule because sometimes older siblings or the media might expose them. Any student found with tobacco, vapes, alcohol or drugs may face disciplinary action, and we will confiscate the items and likely involve the police for drugs or alcohol. If a student appears to be under the influence, we will contact parents/guardians and get medical help if needed, then follow with discipline. The bottom line: do not bring or use these substances; they are harmful and against school rules and the law.

- **Truancy and Unauthorized Departure:** Skipping school (truancy) or leaving school grounds without permission is not allowed (and unsafe). Students must stay in assigned areas; being in an off-limits area (like another grade's hallway, or in the parking lot without permission) is also prohibited.
- **Violence or Physical Aggression:** Hitting, fighting, pushing, or any physical act intended to harm someone is not allowed. Even play-fighting or "just joking around" can lead to someone getting hurt, so it's prohibited. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

This list isn't every possible misbehavior, but remember: our rule of thumb is that students should behave in a manner that is safe, respectful, and responsible. If you wouldn't do it in front of your parents or a police officer, you probably shouldn't do it at school. We have zero tolerance for the most serious behaviors (weapons, drugs, extreme violence, etc.), meaning those may result in strong and immediate consequences.

Discipline Procedures and Consequences

When students choose not to follow the rules or meet behavior expectations, staff will respond with appropriate consequences and also guidance to help the student learn from the mistake. Our approach is generally one of progressive discipline; meaning if a minor rule is broken, the first consequence might be a simple correction or warning, and repeated or serious misbehavior results in more serious consequences.

Here are possible disciplinary actions, in increasing order of severity:

- **Verbal Reminder/Reprimand:** For many minor issues (talking out of turn, running in hall, minor teasing), a teacher or aide will simply give a reminder of the rule or a stern word to stop the behavior. This usually fixes the problem on the spot.
- **Time-Out or Cool Down:** A student might be asked to sit apart from the group for a few minutes (within the classroom or at recess) to calm down and reflect, especially if emotions are high.
- **Loss of Privilege:** A student may lose a classroom privilege or a special activity for a short time. For example, a student who misuses a classroom game might lose the privilege to play with it for a week. Or misbehavior at an assembly could mean the student isn't allowed to attend the next assembly.
- **Parent/Guardian Contact:** Teachers will often call or send a note home if a behavior issue continues. We believe in keeping parents/guardians informed early so we can partner to address the behavior.
- **Lunch/Recess Detention:** Often referred to as "Noon Detention." This means the student spends their lunch and/or recess time in a supervised room (often the office or classroom) instead of with peers. They will be given time to eat but will not have free play. This consequence is used for issues like repeated rough play, accumulation of tardies, or to make up work as needed.
- **After-School Detention:** Typically for grades 4–6 (rarely for younger without parent agreement). This is a more serious consequence where a student stays after school (usually from dismissal until about 4:00 PM) on a designated day. During detention, the student might do schoolwork or reflective tasks under supervision. Parents/Guardians will be notified at least a day in advance so transportation can be arranged. Not showing up for an assigned detention without a valid reason will usually result in a make-up of that detention plus an additional consequence.
- **Behavior Contract or Plan:** For ongoing behavior problems, the principal, teacher, student, and parent may meet to create a written plan with goals and rewards/consequences to improve the student's behavior. This is more of an intervention than a punishment, aiming to support positive change.
- **Referral to Counselor or Specialist:** If behavior seems linked to emotional or social issues, we may involve our school counselor, a behavioral specialist, or liaison to work with the student. This isn't punitive – it's a resource for the child to get help in learning better coping strategies.
- **In-School Detention (ISD):** The student is removed from regular classes and spends a day (or multiple days) in a separate supervised area to do their schoolwork. They get credit for work completed and are considered "present" for attendance, but they are not with peers. ISD is used for more serious infractions or when other interventions haven't corrected the behavior. It allows the student to still do

work but serves as a strong consequence. Parents/Guardians are notified when a student is assigned ISD.

- **Emergency Removal:** If a student's behavior is so disruptive or dangerous that it cannot be managed (for example, the student is physically aggressive or extremely defiant and is a danger to others or the learning environment), a teacher or the principal can have the student immediately removed from class or school for the rest of the day. The principal will then investigate and determine further consequences. Emergency removal is a short-term measure and will be followed by contact with parents/guardians the same day. (ORC 3313.66 allows this when a student poses a threat.)
- **Out-of-School Suspension (OSS):** This means the student is not allowed to attend school or any school activities for a specified number of days (up to 10 days per incident, per Ohio law, and longer only if expulsion is pursued). Suspensions are reserved for major rule violations or repeated offenses after other steps have failed. During a suspension, the student is marked unexcused for those days (though they are allowed to complete work) and may not be on school property. Parents/guardians will receive written notification of a suspension, including start and end dates and the reason. A suspended student is entitled to due process, meaning they can appeal the decision to the superintendent (details will be in the suspension letter). However, the suspension is in effect during any appeal. **For K–3 students:** By Ohio law, students in grades K–3 cannot be suspended or expelled *except* in serious circumstances involving weapons or threats to safety. We generally use other methods for primary grades, but we must note the law.
- **Expulsion:** This is the removal of a student from school for an extended period (up to 80 school days, or in some cases a year for certain offenses like bringing a firearm). Only the superintendent can expel a student, and it is used only for the most egregious violations or persistent misbehavior that hasn't improved with lesser measures. Expulsion at the K–6 level is extremely rare. Parents/Guardians would be notified of their rights to appeal to the Board of Education if this were to occur.

Our discipline aims to be fair and consistent, but also individualized to the situation. Factors like a student's age, intent, and prior behavior record are considered. For instance, a first-time mild offense might just get a warning, but the same action by a student who has been warned before would get a detention. Also, some actions carry automatic serious consequences (non-negotiable). For example, bringing a knife to school may lead to immediate suspension pending further action, regardless of whether the student "meant" harm or not.

We also partner with our School Resource Officer (SRO) or local law enforcement when appropriate. If a student's action violates the law (for example, physical assault, drugs, threats of violence), the school will not only discipline internally but also may involve the police for further investigation or charges.

Discipline Records and Due Process

Anytime a student is given a consequence beyond a minor time-out or warning, it is usually documented. You may receive a copy of a discipline referral or incident report. We maintain these records to track behavior patterns and ensure we're following through appropriately.

Students have the right to due process when facing serious discipline: The principal will inform the student of what rule was broken and give the student a chance to explain their side or any misunderstandings before deciding on a suspension. Parents/Guardians are then notified of the decision and have the right to appeal suspensions (in writing to the superintendent within 5 days of the suspension notice). Expulsions have a more formal process with hearings at the district level.

Our hope is always to resolve issues at the lowest level possible. We understand that elementary-aged children are still learning self-control and social skills. We use mistakes as teachable moments. We ask parents/guardians to support our efforts by reinforcing the importance of school rules at home. When school and home work together, kids receive a consistent message and tend to improve behavior.

Dress Code

We expect students to dress appropriately for a school setting. Student attire should be safe, modest, and not distracting to the learning environment. While elementary students have a lot of leeway to wear comfortable, kid-friendly clothes, there are some clear guidelines:

- **Cleanliness and Weather:** Students should come to school in clean clothes and having attended to personal hygiene (as age-appropriate). In colder weather, coats, hats, and gloves are necessary for recess. We will go outside if possible. In warmer weather, shorts are fine, but remember the length rule. Tank tops should have adequate coverage.
- **Footwear:** For safety, proper shoes must be worn. Students should wear closed-toe shoes or sneakers especially for P.E. and recess. Flip-flops, slides, or loose sandals can be dangerous on the playground (toes can get stubbed, shoes fall off during running, etc.), so we strongly discourage flip-flops or backless footwear. Additionally, shoes with wheels (heelies) or cleats are not allowed in school. On gym days, sneakers are required.
- **General Modesty:** Clothes should cover the torso and undergarments. This means no bare midriffs (tummies should be covered), no excessively low-cut tops, and no visible underwear (waistbands should be around the waist, not sagging). For girls, if wearing tank tops, the straps should be reasonably wide (spaghetti straps or strapless tops are not appropriate unless covered by a sweater). Skirts, dresses, and shorts should be roughly mid-thigh or longer. A good rule: when hands are at the student's side, shorts/skirts should reach past the fingertips. If leggings or tight-fitting pants are worn, the shirt or skirt worn over them should also reach mid-thigh.
- **Hats and Accessories:** Hats, hoods, and sunglasses are not to be worn inside the school during the regular day (exception: special spirit days or hat days approved by the school). Students should remove hats upon entering. Hooded sweatshirts ("hoodies") are fine to wear, but the hood should stay down. This is partly for manners and partly so we can easily see students' faces for security. Also, any accessories that could be unsafe or disruptive (like chains, spiked jewelry, etc.) are not permitted. Jewelry should be simple and not pose a hazard (for instance, very long earrings that could get caught in play might be unsafe).
- **No Offensive Images/Language:** Clothing must not have writing or pictures that are inappropriate. This includes profanity, racial or hate symbols, depictions of violence or gore, or anything referencing alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or sexual content. For example, a shirt advertising a beer company or showing a weapon or containing a rude message would not be allowed. We want messages on clothing to be positive or neutral.

If a student's attire does not meet the dress code: A staff member or the principal will discuss it privately with the student. Depending on the issue, we might ask the student to adjust (e.g., put on a sweatshirt over a spaghetti-strap top, pull up sagging pants). We might provide an alternative clothing item (we keep some clean T-shirts or sweatpants in the clinic for emergencies) to wear for the day. In some cases, we will call home for a parent/guardian to bring a change of clothes. The student may have to sit out of class (in the office) until properly attired, and any class time missed for this will be unexcused. Repeated dress code violations or refusal to comply will result in disciplinary action.

The intent of the dress code is not to police fashion, but to ensure a respectful, distraction-free learning environment and keep students safe. We appreciate parents' help in guiding children to make good clothing choices for school.

Hazing/Bullying/Harassment

Hazing and bullying of any type are prohibited. Hazing is any act coercing someone into an initiation that causes mental or physical harm (not common in elementary, but still not allowed). Bullying/harassment can be peer-to-peer or student-to-staff and includes cyberbullying.

Students who bully others will face discipline (warnings, counseling, suspension, etc., depending on severity). Students who make false reports of bullying can also be disciplined. Retaliation against anyone who reports bullying is strictly prohibited.

We encourage a climate where students feel safe to report concerns. Reports can be made directly to a teacher or principal, or even anonymously via a note or the district's online reporting system. We will protect those who report and keep reports as confidential as possible while investigating.

Positive Behavior Support (PBIS)

We actively teach and reward good behavior. Our building follows Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). We have three core expectations we remind students of regularly: for grades 5–6: Be Respectful, Be Prepared, Be Engaged; for grades PreK–4: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Really Awesome! These are phrased in kid-friendly ways and taught for different settings (classroom, hallway, playground, bus, etc.). You might see posters around the school as reminders.

Teachers and staff give specific positive feedback and sometimes tangible rewards (like “Falcon tickets” or stickers, or privilege time) to students who demonstrate these behaviors. We also have assemblies or little celebrations to recognize classes or students who model excellence in character. By focusing on the positive, we strive to create a school culture where good behavior is the norm.

However, when misbehavior happens, we use it as an opportunity to correct and reteach expectations, while also assigning appropriate consequences.

Technology Misuse

Violation of technology rules can lead to losing the privilege to use devices at school for a period of time. For example, a student found playing on unapproved websites might lose computer time for the week. More serious abuse, like trying to access restricted areas of the network, bullying, or viewing obscene material, may result in referrals to the principal, and consequences like detention or suspension (depending on severity). If any illegal activity is involved (e.g., hacking, sharing or accessing illegal content), law enforcement may be contacted.

Remember, the Acceptable Use Policy you and your child sign is a formal agreement. The full details of the AUP (Board Policy EDE) are available on the district website. By following those rules, we ensure technology remains a powerful, safe tool for learning.

Transportation Rules Discipline

School bus transportation is an extension of the school day, and students must behave on the bus just as they are expected to in school. Safety is the number one priority on all school vehicles.

Basic Bus Rules:

- Remain seated at all times while the bus is in motion.
- Keep hands, arms, and objects inside the bus. Never throw anything out of the windows or within the bus.
- Talk quietly, which means no screaming or loud distractive noises that could startle the driver.
- Acknowledge and obey the bus driver's instructions promptly. The driver is in charge of safety.
- No eating or drinking on the bus (choking hazard and cleanliness issue) unless the driver gives specific permission.
- Treat others kindly: No pushing, fighting, or bullying on the bus. All school anti-bullying rules apply on the bus as well.

- Keep the aisles clear (hold backpacks on your lap if necessary) and your belongings with you.
- When getting on or off, do so carefully: wait for the bus to stop completely, use the handrail, and if crossing the street, cross in front of the bus at least 10 feet ahead so the driver can see you and signal when it's safe. Never cross behind the bus.

Bus Stop: Arrive at your stop about 5 minutes early. Behave at the bus stop: No playing in the road, respect neighbors' property, and line up when the bus is coming. If your child has to cross the street to board, they must wait for the driver's signal before crossing. The bus has cameras (video surveillance) to monitor behavior. Drivers will report issues of bus misconduct to the principal.

Bus Discipline: Misconduct on the bus may result in the following, generally:

- Warning to student
- Call/note to parent/guardian
- Special bus seat assignment
- Suspension from riding the bus

Severe misconduct (like fighting on the bus, or endangering the driver by distracting them, etc.) may result in a bus suspension or even immediate removal from the bus by the driver calling for help. Fighting on the bus, for example, may result in bus suspension even on the first offense. In extreme cases, a student could lose bus privileges permanently for the year, and the family would need to arrange alternative transportation.

Losing bus privileges does not excuse absences. If a student can't ride the bus due to behavior, parents/guardians must ensure the child still gets to school. We ask parents/guardians to review bus rules with their children. Riding the bus is a privilege, not a right, and it can be withdrawn to protect everyone's safety (Board Policy EEAC).

Video Surveillance

Our school may use security cameras in common areas (hallways, entrances, parking lots, buses) to enhance safety. These cameras are not actively monitored at all times but recordings may be reviewed after an incident. Video may be used as evidence in disciplinary matters. Due to privacy rules, we do not allow parents/guardians to view footage that contains other students, but we will use it internally as needed.

Technology Use (Acceptable Use Policy/AUP)

Technology is an integral part of learning at Hillsdale. Students use school owned computers, ChromeBooks, tablets, and the internet to research information, practice skills, and create projects. To ensure technology is used safely and responsibly, all students and their parents/guardians must agree to the district's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) each year (typically signed via FinalForms).

Computers & Internet

- **Email and Google Accounts:** Students may have school Google accounts (for Google Classroom, Docs, etc.). Use your school email or account only for school-related work. Do not send silly or unrelated messages during class. Remember that school staff can see or retrieve anything done on school accounts or devices. There is no absolute privacy. This is not to spy on you, but to monitor for safety and appropriate use. So, always use respectful language and good judgment in any digital communication.
- **Respect Privacy & Security:** Never share your passwords with other students. Don't try to access accounts or files that aren't yours. It's like reading someone else's diary: not allowed. Also, do not enter personal information (full name, address, phone number) into websites or online forms unless a teacher and parent/guardian know and approve. We teach basic internet safety: never agree to meet someone you only met online, and inform an adult if anyone online asks for personal details or makes you uncomfortable.

- **School Work Only:** School devices (and internet access) are provided for educational purposes. This means you should use them for class assignments, learning games or activities assigned by teachers, research for projects, typing papers, etc. Do not use school devices to play random games, browse YouTube freely, or access social media during school time.
- **Stay on Approved Websites:** We have filters that block many inappropriate sites, but no filter is perfect. It's your job to only go to websites that are teacher-approved or appropriate for school. Visiting sites with violent, pornographic, or hateful content is strictly forbidden and also unsafe. If you accidentally click a bad link or something inappropriate pops up, turn off the monitor or close the lid and tell the teacher immediately. You won't get in trouble for an accident if you report it right away. Trying to bypass filters or "hack" the system is a serious violation.

Cyberbullying and Digital Etiquette

Whether using school devices or at home on personal ones, students are expected to treat others kindly online just as in person. Cyberbullying (sending mean messages, spreading rumors online, posting hurtful things about someone, or excluding someone from online groups to hurt them) is not tolerated. Even if this happens outside of school, if it carries over into the school environment (for example, causing conflict or a student to feel unsafe at school), the school can discipline those involved.

Students should not use district technology to harass or bully others. If you get an inappropriate message or see something concerning, report it. Do not forward it or join in.

Recording or photographing others at school without permission is against the rules. Many devices can take pictures or videos, but you must not do so unless a teacher has said it's part of an assignment, etc. (and even then, you'd need the other person's consent if they're the focus). Posting pictures or videos of other students or staff online without permission is a privacy violation.

Personal Electronic Devices (Cell Phones, Smartwatches, etc.)

Cell Phones and Smart Devices: Our focus is on learning, so personal electronics should not be a distraction. Students are not permitted to use cell phones or similar devices during the school day. If a student carries a phone for after-school communication, it must remain off (or on silent) and kept in the student's locker or backpack from arrival until dismissal. Smartwatches that have texting/calling capability should not be used for communication during school hours either.

- If a student needs to call home, they should ask to use the office phone (for example, if they forgot something or feel ill). We will always allow a child to call home for important reasons.
- Students are not allowed to call, text, or receive calls/texts on their personal phones or watches during school hours. Parents/Guardians, we ask you not to call or text your child's device during the day. If there's an emergency or message, call the office and we will relay it.
- If a device is seen being used without permission, the teacher or principal may confiscate it and hold it in the office until the end of the day (first offense). The student can pick it up at dismissal and will get a warning. If it happens again, a parent/guardian may be required to come retrieve the device, and the student might lose the privilege of bringing it to school at all for a period of time. Repeated violations or misuse (like using it to cheat or to bully someone) may result in disciplinary action according to the Code of Conduct (Board Policy JFCK).
- We understand some parents/guardians like their child to have a phone for after-school contact. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal devices, so you are bringing-at-your-own-risk. We recommend such devices be clearly labeled and remain out of sight.

Exceptions: If there is a unique circumstance where a student might need to use a device (for instance, a medical reason or a project demonstration), the parent/guardian should discuss it with the principal to get prior approval.

This Student Handbook is for the 2026–2027 school year and replaces all previous student handbooks and conduct guides. It is meant to be a helpful guide, not a contract, and explains our school rules, expectations, and how we work together to create a safe, fair, and caring school environment.

This handbook reflects current Hillsdale Board of Education policies and changes in Ohio law known at the time of publication. If anything in this handbook conflicts with Board policy or state or federal law, the higher authority will always be followed. Because laws and policies can change, the district reviews them regularly. Families will be notified if important updates occur during the school year.

This handbook applies only to the current school year and will be reviewed and updated as needed for future years.

Thank you to our students and families for taking the time to read this handbook. By working together and following these guidelines, we help make our school a place where everyone feels respected, supported, and ready to learn. Let's have a wonderful year learning, growing, and Taking Flight together!