

Student Handbook

St. Mary's County Public Schools 2026-2027
A Guide for Students and Parents/Legal Guardians



Central Administration, 23160 Moakley Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650 (301) 475-5511

ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2026-2027 System Information

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Note: For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.smcps.org>.



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Section 1 - Student Attendance

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE

St. Mary's County Public Schools' student attendance policy is based on the overriding premise that success is dependent upon continuous and consistent classroom instructional experience. Students need opportunities to master essential academic knowledge and skills, to develop an appropriate sense of self-worth, to establish positive peer relationships, and to develop a sense of responsibility.

The school cannot educate students or provide support and assistance to students when they are absent.

The school stands in loco parentis during school functions and, therefore, must take measures to ensure the safety and well-being of its students.

Under law, every child who resides in St. Mary's County and is five (5) years or older and under eighteen (18) shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year, unless the child is elsewhere receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies taught in the public schools to children of the same age. **This applies only to students who turned age seventeen (17) on or after July 1, 2017.**

Admission to Kindergarten

Children admitted to the Kindergarten program in the public schools shall be at least five years old on or before September 1 of the school year in which they apply for entrance.

Early entrance to Kindergarten may be considered for children who will not be five years old on or before September 1 but will be five years old by November 1 **and** who demonstrate exceptional ability in reading and mathematics.

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may request information concerning early entrance to Kindergarten from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at 301-475-5511, ext. 32101.

Admission to First Grade

Children admitted to the first grade in the public schools shall be at least six years old on or before September 1 of the school year in which they apply for entrance. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may request information concerning early entrance to first grade from the child's home school or the Supervisor of Elementary Programs at 301-475-5511, ext. 32123.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Registration Procedures

All persons age 5 through 20 whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) reside within St. Mary's County may attend public schools without payment of tuition.

A birth certificate or other proof of legal age (outlined in the Maryland Student Records System Manual) and proof of residence are required by the school administration upon registration.

All students entering school for the first time are required to have a physical examination, submit a report from the examining physician, and present certification stating that the child has received immunizations against communicable diseases as specified by the Department of Health.

Registration in Attendance Areas

Admission to a public school will be made by registering at the school which is located in the attendance area where the applicant resides.

Application for admission or transfer by students who reside outside the attendance area will be made to the Director of Student Services/Director of Special Education.

Minor Students

Minor students must be accompanied by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to register for school.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

St. Mary's County Public Schools does not discriminate against homeless students. In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, when students who are homeless enter a school to register, they are admitted even if they do not have appropriate paperwork.

STUDENT DISMISSAL PRECAUTIONS

Permission to Leave School During the School Day

When leaving school early, students are required to bring a written request from the parent(s)/legal guardian(s). A student under the age of 18 must be signed in or out by his/her parent(s)/legal guardian(s). A valid photo identification must be presented when signing students out of school.

Early Dismissal

Students should not be dismissed early from school for religious instruction classes, music, dance, gymnastics, or similar classes.

STUDENT ABSENCES

The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of a student must provide the necessary documentation for absences on the day that the student returns to school. If the necessary documentation is not received by the school within three (3) school days, the absence(s) will be coded unlawful. Appropriate documentation of absences should include the child's name, date(s) of absence, reason for absence, and parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' signature (written note). The documentation may be provided by phone, email, school website portal, or written note.

Days Absent

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance for four hours or more of the school day. A student is counted present for one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) day if in attendance for at least two hours of the school day, but less than four hours. A grade 12 student scheduled for less than a full day is to be counted present based on the amount of time he/she is scheduled. For example, a grade 12 student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance for that block of time. If the student is absent for that block of time, the student will be counted absent for a full day. A grade 12 student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) day if the student is in attendance for one hour.

Lawful Absences

The following reasons are deemed lawful absences:

- death in the immediate family;
- student illness, for which the principal may require a physician's certificate;
- court summons;
- hazardous weather conditions;
- work, if approved or sponsored by the school;
- participate in approved civic engagement activities;
- observance of a religious holiday;
- state of emergency;
- medical/dental appointment;
- pregnant and parenting students (refer to SMCPs Board Regulations JED-R, JHCG-R)
- suspension;
- lack of authorized transportation; and
- other circumstances which, in the judgment of the principal or designee, constitute a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

Excessive Absences/Chronic Absenteeism

If a student is absent ten percent (18 days) or more days, the student will be referred to the Attendance Pupil Services Team (PST) for consideration of retention for the following year and/or credit withholding to ensure that the student has had an appropriate opportunity to learn and master grade level skills and/or course content. Students who are excessively absent from school may be referred to the Interagency Committee on School Attendance (ICSA).

Tardiness/Early Sign Out

Students arriving at school after the start of the student's school day will be considered tardy. Students leaving early before the end of the school day will be counted as having a sign-out.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN 4 PROGRAMS

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) offers a high-quality full-day Pre-Kindergarten program to income-eligible families at no cost to the family. Pre-Kindergarten is funded by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The goal of Pre-Kindergarten is to prepare students so they enter Kindergarten ready to learn. By expanding access to economically disadvantaged families first, the intent is to assess readiness, bolster family support, and narrow opportunity gaps so early education experiences put economically disadvantaged students on a trajectory for success.

Children who are deemed income eligible, homeless, or have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are accepted first. Families must then register their child in the school in which they are accepted.

Eligibility for Acceptance in Pre-Kindergarten

Under the Blueprint, eligibility is based on a child's age and a family's annual income. In SMCPS, the child and family must reside in St. Mary's County and the child must be 4-years old on or before September 1st of the year in which they are applying. Income eligibility is based on a system of tiers. Tier I families that have verifiable income up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible and are placed first in the home school or where space is available. Tier II families have verifiable income between 301% and 600% of the Federal Poverty Level and are placed on the waitlist. Should space or locations be available after October 1st, acceptance in rank order is applied. Tier III families have verifiable income greater than 601% of the Federal Poverty Level and are waitlisted. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are placed in the least restrictive environment by the IEP Team regardless of the family's income.

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may apply online and upload their child's proof of birth, proof of residency, and documentation of the family's annual income. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) without Wi-Fi access may contact the home school or the Department of Title I and Family Engagement

for assistance at 301-475-5511, extension 32136. Printed applications are available in English and Spanish. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of eligible children are notified beginning in May 2026.

Pre-Kindergarten Attendance

Attendance procedures are the same for Pre-Kindergarten as all other students since Pre-Kindergarten is now full day. Establishing regular on-time attendance is important to launch childhood routines, basic skills, and social-emotional expectations for learning. A Pre-Kindergarten student is counted present if the student is in attendance two (2) hours or more during the school day.

HOME/HOSPITAL TEACHING & CHRONIC HEALTH IMPAIRED PROGRAM

Short-term instruction is provided to students who are unable to attend in-person classes due to properly diagnosed physical or emotional health conditions. These services will be provided virtually or in a location determined by the Department of Student Services, with a responsible adult present. The duration of services is determined by the authorized prescriber and approved by the coordinator of Home/Hospital Teaching, who assigns home teachers to students. The Home/Hospital Teaching program, although correlated with the student's planned course of studies, cannot provide all of the resources and courses provided at school. The Home/Hospital Teaching program is designed for short-term educational assistance. All efforts should be made to have students return to school. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may contact the school counselor for information and required forms. All questions related to school activities should be directed to the school. When school buildings are closed to students and staff for public safety and/or public health concerns, the delivery of Home/Hospital teaching services may be re-evaluated.

Section 2 - Student Welfare

HEALTH CARE

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are responsible for the health care of their children. The health of students in St. Mary's County Public Schools is viewed as an important factor in the learning process. Cooperation among a student's parent(s)/ legal guardian(s), healthcare provider, and school is essential to safeguard a student's health and ensure academic success. Each school has a school nurse. Information regarding school nursing services may be obtained from the school's website's nurse page or by contacting the Supervisor of Health Services at 301-475-5511, extension 32150.

Student Health Information

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are responsible for informing the school about their child's educationally relevant health history. The Student Health Information form is provided and completed at the time of registration and is reviewed by the school nurse. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are encouraged to contact the school nurse to discuss changes in their child's health.

Telehealth

Telehealth aims to enhance student health and well-being by increasing access to various healthcare services within the school environment, such as primary and specialty care, as well as behavioral health services, while minimizing the loss of instructional time. St. Mary's County Public Schools are now offering confidential space for telehealth appointments for students at each high school, one day per week during the designated "One Lunch" period. Families must arrange and coordinate these appointments in advance with their high school and healthcare provider. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must sign their student out of school and remain with their student for the duration of the appointment. Families are responsible for bringing their own device to connect with their personal healthcare provider.

Immunization

In accordance with the laws of the state of Maryland, any student entering or attending St. Mary's County Public Schools shall provide evidence of immunization in accordance with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Minimum Vaccine Requirements for Children Enrolled in Preschool Programs and in Schools.

Students with less than complete immunizations must provide an appointment date for the needed immunizations. The appointment must be no later than 20 calendar days from the date of entrance. Military children have 30 calendar days from the date of entrance to obtain any immunization(s) required for school entry. This appointment date will serve as the exclusion date if the student fails to keep the appointment. Exemption from immunization is permitted if it is contrary to a student's religious beliefs. Students may also be exempted from immunization requirements if a physician certifies that it would create a medical problem. Questions concerning immunization requirements should be addressed to the school nurse or principal.

Physical Examination

In order for a child to enter a Maryland public school for the first time, a physical examination by a physician or certified nurse practitioner must be completed within nine months prior to entering the public school system or within six months after entering the system. A physical examination form designated by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene must be used to meet this requirement. Exemption from a physical examination is permitted if it is contrary to a student's or family's religious beliefs.

School entry physical examination reports are reviewed, and a nursing assessment is completed by the school nurse, together with the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), for all students with diagnosed health problems which may impact learning.

Lead Testing

All children born on or after January 1, 2015 must be tested for lead at ages 12 and 24 months. Maryland law requires ALL public prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students to have a Blood Lead Testing Certificate (DHMH Form 4620) on file. The form is to be completed and returned to the school within twenty (20) calendar days of school entry.

Hearing and Vision Screening

Unless evidence is presented that a student's vision has been tested within the past year by an ophthalmologist or optometrist, vision and hearing screening required by Maryland law will be completed in the year that a student enters the school system and in grades one and eight. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and/or school staff concerned about a student's hearing or vision may also refer the student for screening by the school nurse.

Vision and hearing screening is a relatively short process. Screenings are not diagnostic, but instead are used to identify a child at risk for vision/hearing problems. Screenings do not replace examinations performed by a health or eye care professional that provide diagnosis and treatment, if indicated. Vision/hearing problems that go undetected or uncorrected may impair a child's development, lead to behavior problems in school, interfere with learning, and impact health and well-being into adulthood.

A student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) objects in writing to hearing and vision screening, on the basis of the tenets and practice of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the student is an adherent or member, may not be required to take these screenings.

Illness and Communicable Diseases

When school personnel suspect that a student may have an illness or communicable disease, the school will notify the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and arrangements will be made for the student to be picked up. Medical follow-up should be sought by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to determine if the student has a communicable disease.

Students diagnosed with a communicable disease may require exclusion from school. Before the student is readmitted, a healthcare provider's statement may be required. Before returning to school, a student must be free of diarrhea, vomiting, and fever for 24 hours without the use of medications to control these symptoms.

In the event of student illness during the school day, every effort will be made to contact the parent(s)/ legal guardian(s). If the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or designee cannot be reached,

the school reserves the right to act in the best interest of the student, which may include calling 911.

Face Coverings

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDS), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the SMCHD is incorporated into the decision-making process to determine masking protocols for St. Mary's County Public Schools. Data is evaluated regularly, and detailed masking requirements are available through SMCPSS communications.

Emergency Medical Procedures

Emergency medical information for students is to be supplied by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) each year. This information is kept on file and is considered confidential. When an accident or illness occurs at school, standard first aid practice is followed.

Decisions about calling healthcare providers, notifying family members, or sending the student to the hospital are made immediately. When possible, a school health services provider (i.e., school nurse or supervisor of health services) is involved in this decision-making process. If it is deemed necessary, the school staff calls 911. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may also request that 911 be called. When 911 is called as a result of injury or illness, the student's care becomes the responsibility of the rescue services personnel upon their arrival at the scene. The usual rescue services procedure is to transport the person to the nearest or most appropriate hospital. As part of this process, the staff person:

- notifies school administration and
- notifies the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or other designated guardian/adult. If the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or other designated adult cannot be reached, the person needing care is sent to the hospital, and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are reached as soon as possible.

Allergies

Severe allergies are increasingly being identified in our student population. Some examples of allergens may include: food, insects, and medications. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are responsible for informing the school nurse about their child's allergies, as well as providing written medical documentation, instructions, and medications, if needed, as directed by the healthcare provider. To ensure a safe environment for students with allergies and reduce the risk of accidental exposure in the school setting, school personnel work with students, parent(s)/legal guardian(s), and healthcare providers to develop a plan that accommodates the child's needs. An emergency action medical plan may be developed to minimize risk and provide a safe educational environment. Please refer to the [SMCPSS Guidelines to Reduce the Risk of Allergen Exposure](#) webpage for additional information.

Due to food allergy and food safety concerns, all food brought to school for students to consume, excluding individual student lunches, or as provided by SMCPS Food Services, shall be commercially prepared and packaged to include an ingredient list.

Student Pregnancy

When information indicating the possibility that a student is pregnant is brought to the attention of a member of the school staff, the student is referred to the school nurse and is counseled to see a healthcare provider. In the event that the student is pregnant, they should be made aware of available resources. A student who is pregnant, either married or unmarried, who has not completed their high school education may elect to remain in the regular school program.

Sun Safety

Sun safety practices that are followed consistently and early in life contribute to the prevention of skin cancer. Facilitating sun safety habits in the school setting can assist students and staff in reducing potential risk for ultraviolet-related illnesses. Students may possess and use sunscreen on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity, according to manufacturer's directions without written permission from a health care provider.

Sun safety practices include the following:

- Application of sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher is recommended 30 minutes before outdoor activities, field trips, field days, and/or environmental service-learning trips, etc.
- Sunscreen should be reapplied according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Student or parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' application of sunscreen at home prior to arriving at school is recommended when outdoor activities are planned for the morning.
- Students may not share sunscreen.
- Students may only carry and apply sunscreen provided by their parent(s)/legal guardian(s).
- Wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses may be used outdoors to reduce sun exposure to the eyes, face, head, ears, and neck.

MEDICATION AND MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medication

In general, the administration of medication to students while they are in school is discouraged. Treatment schedules which allow doses of medication to be given at times other than during school hours are preferred and encouraged. When, in the opinion of the prescribing healthcare provider, it is medically necessary for the student to be given medication during school hours, such medication must be administered in accordance with the following guidelines.

- The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must obtain a [Parent\(s\)/Legal Guardian\(s\) and Physician/Prescriber Authorization-Medication Orders \(PS 109\) form](#) signed by the health care provider and the parent/legal guardian. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) should bring the

completed PS 109 form to school, along with a supply of medication. Medication is not to be transported by students on the bus.

- Each prescription medication must be in the original pharmacy container clearly labeled with the child's name and date of birth; medication name, strength and dose to be given; frequency and route of administration, name of the prescriber, date of the prescription, pharmacy discard date and pharmacy contact information. Each medication that is available for purchase over-the-counter must be in the original, unopened container.
- The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must submit a new order (form PS 109) from the prescriber with any change in medication dose, time, or duration of administration.
- The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must give the first dose of any new medication unless the order is for "in-school" or emergency medication only.
- The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must pick up unused or discontinued medication at school. Medication not collected by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be destroyed.

A student who brings and/or takes medication of any type without following the medication regulation is entirely the responsibility of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and student, and not that of either the school or the health department.

Emergency Medication

Students who may require administration of emergency medications in the school setting will have a plan to ensure immediate access to the emergency medication. This includes, but is not limited to, rescue medications for seizures, anaphylaxis, respiratory, blood, cardiac, and endocrine disorders.

Students with emergency medication prescribed by their health care provider shall follow the prescription medication guideline to ensure that individual emergency medication is available at all times.

Emergency medication is the only type of medication eligible for student self-carry and self-administration. A [Parent\(s\)/Legal Guardian\(s\) and Physician/Prescriber Authorization-Medication Orders \(PS 109\) form](#) that includes a health care provider order for self carry/self administration as well as parent/guardian permission and school nurse assessment and approval are required before self carry/self administration is permitted.

Stock Medication

St. Mary's County Public Schools only stock epinephrine, albuterol, and naloxone to be used during the school day in emergency situations as directed by the Supervisor of Health Services and the St. Mary's County Health Officer. Stock medications are administered by the school nurse or their trained designees. These medications do not require parent/legal guardian authorization and are not always available during off-site activities.

- **Epinephrine**

Epinephrine is a quick-acting medication administered to treat anaphylaxis, which is a life-threatening allergic reaction that may occur in students with known or unknown allergies. This reaction can be sudden and severe. Anyone receiving epinephrine must be transported by rescue services personnel to the nearest hospital for further emergency treatment.

- **Albuterol**

Albuterol is an inhaled medication used to relax and open the airways in the lungs to make breathing easier and provide fast treatment of respiratory distress or a breathing emergency.

- **Naloxone**

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose. This medication is available in each St. Mary's County Public Schools' health office and in a secure wall unit in an accessible location near a centrally located AED. Anyone receiving naloxone must be transported by rescue services personnel to the nearest hospital for further emergency treatment.

Medical Cannabis

The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or designated caregiver is permitted to administer medical cannabis to a student, who is a qualifying medical cannabis patient, on school property, during school-sponsored activities, and on a school bus. Before the caregiver is permitted to administer medical cannabis on school property, during school-sponsored activities, and on a school bus, the student's parent/guardian shall contact the school nurse and the school administrator for further guidance.

Medical Procedures

The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must obtain a [Parent\(s\)/ Legal Guardian\(s\) and Physician/Prescriber Authorization - Medical Procedures \(PS 110\) form](#) signed by the health care provider and the parent/legal guardian. Medical procedures administered at school should be done under the guidance of the school nurse.

Examples of medical procedures include but are not limited to:

- catheterization
- gastric tube feedings
- tracheostomy care
- suctioning
- blood glucose testing
- oxygen therapy

STUDENT SAFETY

St. Mary's County Public Schools believes that one of our greatest responsibilities is to provide for the safety and security of our students, staff, and visitors. A safe and orderly environment ensures the greatest opportunity for student learning. Open communication, strong community partnerships, progressive policies and procedures, and proactive action by staff enhance school safety and security. Additional information is available on the SMCPs website.

<https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security>

Supervision

Students in school, at school-sponsored activities, or traveling to and from school on school buses are responsible to the school, and the school is responsible for them. School personnel assigned to their supervision serve in loco parentis. Students who engage in any type of school practice or activity after dismissal time should have written permission from home. The school will not assume responsibility for students following the conclusion of such practice or activity.

Student Risk Behaviors

St. Mary's County Public Schools, through community partnerships and collaboration, provide education and prevention programs that directly address high-risk youth behaviors. These behaviors are defined as any behavior having a negative impact on the development, health, and well-being of students. Prevention programs include a focus on mental health awareness, suicide prevention, bullying prevention, substance misuse, cyber safety, young driver safety, and underage drinking. For more information about these and other prevention programs and additional resources, please visit

<https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security/student-risk-behavior>

Threat and Risk Assessments

St. Mary's County Public Schools is committed to maintaining a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff. In accordance with Maryland law, and established system policy and procedures, school personnel are required to respond when there is a concern that a student may be at risk of harming themselves or someone else.

When concerns involving suicide, self-harm, harm to others or threatening communication or behavior are reported or identified, trained school personnel may conduct an assessment, as appropriate. These processes are designed to evaluate the level of concern, identify needed supports and interventions, and determine appropriate steps to promote the safety of students, staff, and the school community.

To preserve the integrity of the assessment process parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and family members are not permitted to attend or sit in on threat and/or risk assessment interviews. However, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be informed of concerns, engaged as partners in the process, and provided information regarding recommendations and next steps as appropriate.

School staff may collaborate with mental health professionals, law enforcement, emergency services, or other community agencies when necessary and appropriate. Risk and threat assessments are safety and prevention processes. Students and families are encouraged to immediately report statements, behaviors, threats, or other concerns involving potential harm to self or others to a school staff member or the [SMCPS Online Tip Reporting System](#).

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

Occasionally, there are factors in a student's appearance and behavior that lead to suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Maryland law requires that all educators and other school employees, including volunteers and bus drivers, report suspected abuse or neglect to the proper authorities for investigation in order that students may be protected from harm and the family may be helped. All employees participate in mandatory training annually to review the procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

Custody

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must provide copies of court orders, protective orders, notarized statements, or other legally binding instruments to the schools their children attend. These documents will be maintained in the student's cumulative record. Should there be a circumstance in which parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are prohibited by court order from having contact with a student, school personnel must have a copy of the court order or other legally binding instrument on file. Students will only be released to those who can be identified as having proper authorization to take custody of the student.

School Emergency Preparedness

St. Mary's County Public Schools continually plans and prepares for events that would necessitate an emergency response. All emergency preparedness and planning is fully coordinated through active participation in a number of emergency planning and response meetings.

Preparedness activities maintained by SMCPS include:

- Annual publication of the School Crisis and Emergency Response Plan and supporting reference guide, ensuring compliance with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.02.02.01-05.
- Participation in legally mandated school-based emergency drills and jurisdictional emergency exercises, ensuring compliance with COMAR 13A.02.02.04. The following drills are required by law:
 - Evacuation (to include Fire Evacuation)
 - Shelter
 - Secure
 - Lock down
 - Hold
 - Drop, cover, and hold - Earthquake

- Severe weather - Tornado or Severe Storm
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED)

Throughout the school year, drills are conducted to familiarize students with response actions and exiting routes out of the school. All drills are conducted under the supervision of the principal or assistant principal and the school staff. Students are instructed in the safety procedures to be followed during the drills or other emergency situations. Additional types of drills to be conducted at schools will include emergency medical and bus evacuation drills. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are encouraged to remind their children of the seriousness of these activities. Site administrators are required to document all drills.

Asbestos Management Plans

In October 1986, the United States Congress enacted the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). Under this law, comprehensive regulations were developed to address the presence of asbestos in public and private elementary and secondary school buildings. These regulations require all schools to inspect for friable and non-friable asbestos, develop asbestos management plans that address asbestos hazards in school buildings, and implement response actions in a timely manner.

The EPA requires the school system to have an accredited inspector perform re-inspections of all school district buildings every three years. An accredited AHERA Inspection/Management Planner will perform the re-inspections and continue to make recommendations for the safe management of asbestos materials in all buildings and relocatables. The school system will perform semi-annual surveillance inspections.

The program for fulfilling AHERA responsibilities is outlined in the asbestos management plan for each school or facility. This plan is available for review at each school site and contains information on inspections, re-inspections, response actions, and post-response action activities, including periodic surveillance activities that are planned or that are in progress.

The asbestos management plan can be reviewed by contacting the Department of Operations within the Division of Supporting Services, 27190 Point Lookout Road, Loveville, Maryland, during normal working hours, or by calling the Department of Operations at 301-475-4256, option 4.

Integrated Pest Management Program

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program employed by St. Mary's County Public Schools is a proactive approach to insect and rodent control in school facilities. The IPM program includes routine, monthly inspections or surveys of all school buildings and grounds to identify conditions conducive to pest invasion, pest population monitoring, non-chemical treatments, and, when necessary, the use of pesticides by personnel meeting the Maryland Department of Agriculture requirements. As a first step in pest control, the IPM approach employs a number of

preventative strategies and alternatives to pesticide application, such as: employee education, source reduction, inspection and identification of potential problem areas, and improved sanitation. Each approach is monitored and evaluated, and modifications are made if necessary. Pesticides are used only as a last resort.

Maryland Law requires that parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of all elementary school children be notified prior to any interior pesticide application. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of elementary school students and staff members employed at an elementary school will receive notification of pesticide applications during the school year.

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of middle and high school students and staff members employed at middle and high schools must submit a written request to the school to receive notification of pesticide applications during the school year. Notification will be provided by the school at least 24 hours prior to a pesticide application unless the application is an emergency. In the case of an emergency application, notification will be provided within 24 hours after the application.

A list of the pesticides and bait stations, by common name, that may be used in school buildings during the school year is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| • abamectin | • hydramethylnon |
| • allethrin | • orthoboric |
| • bifenthrin | • acid |
| • boric acid | • piperonyl |
| • bromadiolone | • butoxide |
| • chlorfenapy | • pyrethrin |
| • cyfluthrin | • silica gel |
| • deltamethrin | • sulfuramid |
| • diphacinone | • sulfonamide |
| • fipronil | |

Copies of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and product labels for each pesticide and bait station used on school property are maintained by the contact person. There may be occasions when a pesticide product that is not listed is used on school property. In the event that this occurs, an SDS sheet will be provided to the school administrator. Parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) will be notified of the application as stated in the notification procedure outlined. Persons wishing to review this information should contact the Department of Operations at 27190 Point Lookout Road, Loveville, MD, 20656; 301-475-4256, extension 4.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather may necessitate the need for schools to have a delayed opening, close for the day, or have an unplanned early release. When a decision is made to have a delayed opening or a closure, a system-based “phone out” will be made to all student households prior to 6:00 a.m. the day of the event, which could be the evening prior to the event. The timing of the “phone out” is dependent on when the schedule change decision has been determined. When a decision for an unplanned early release is made, a system-based “phone out” will be

made to all student households as soon as practicable. Information about all schedule changes will be posted on the St. Mary's County Public Schools Website and social media accounts.

Delayed Openings

In the event that the opening of schools is delayed two hours to permit buses to run their routes under safer conditions, the following will apply:

- All buses will run their routes two hours later than their usual times.
- Dismissal in each school will follow the regular schedule.
- Lunch will be served in each school.
- The Dr. James A Forrest Career and Technology Center (Forrest Center) will operate on a modified schedule.

Emergency Early Dismissal

- Buses will run their afternoon routes in the same order as on the regular school day.
- All afternoon and evening meetings and activities are automatically canceled. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools.
- All third session Forrest Center classes are canceled.

THE COORDINATED PUPIL SERVICES PROGRAM

The Coordinated Pupil Services Program within each school is one component of an overall school program. Each student services area uses a systematic and integrated program to deliver individual and collaborative strategies with the goal of assisting students to achieve academic, health, career, personal, and interpersonal competencies.

Each Pupil Services Team may include a school administrator, school nurse, school counselor, pupil personnel worker, school psychologist, and other appropriate staff. This school team meets at regular intervals and analyzes data to plan, implement, and evaluate how its members can most effectively meet the needs of students.

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

School systems are required to ensure that no qualified person with disabilities shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives or benefits from federal financial assistance. Should you have questions about Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, please contact the Department of Student Services at 301-475-5511, ext. 32150.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Special education services are available at every school in St. Mary's County. To ensure that every child has access to the general education curriculum and every child's educational program is implemented in the least restrictive environment, St. Mary's County Public Schools offers a range of general and special education services in a continuum of educational placements. To the maximum extent appropriate, students receive instruction in the general education classroom with the necessary accommodations and supplementary aids provided under the direction of the special education staff. This integration into the general education classroom allows for maximum interaction among students and staff and encourages students to learn from each other.

The St. Mary's County Public Schools is responsible for providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities regardless of the severity of their disability. Special education programs are continuously evaluated to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our ever-changing student population. St. Mary's County Public Schools is committed to providing all students an education that prepares them academically, socially, and emotionally for adult life. If you have any questions, information is available on the SMCPs' website www.smcps.org/offices/se, or you may contact the Department of Special Education at 301-475-5511, ext. 32206.

The Department of Special Education also offers families and school staff support through the "Partners for Success Resource Center for Families and Schools." The following services may be included:

- special education resources
- information and referral
- assistance with the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- seminars and workshops
- consultation
- lending library
- information about local, state, and national parent organizations

The center is staffed by a parent of a child with a disability. Contact the Partners for Success resource specialist at 240-309-4113 or partnersforsuccess@smcps.com.

TITLE IX

What is Title IX?

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex-based discrimination in all activities and programs of educational institutions receiving federal funds, which includes St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Four Things to Know About Title IX

1. Requires that males and females be given equal opportunities in career and technical education programs.
2. Requires that pregnant and parenting students have equal access to schools and activities, that all separate programs are completely voluntary, and that schools excuse absences due to pregnancy or childbirth for as long as it is deemed medically necessary.
3. Considers sexual harassment as a form of sexual discrimination in schools and is prohibited.
4. Grants protection for survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Federal Regulations

Federal regulations for Title IX were issued in 1975 and prohibit discrimination based on:

- access to courses and other educational activities
- participation in scholastic, club, intramural athletics, or physical education
- marital or parental status or pregnancy
- sex discrimination
- sexual harassment

Anti-Discrimination Statement

The St. Mary's County Public School (SMCPS) System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, or disability in matters affecting access to programs. Likewise, any form of harassment, including, but not limited to, sexual, racial, or disability harassment, will not be tolerated. Any student who believes he/she/they have been subjected to any form of harassment is encouraged to report the allegation of harassment.

SMCPS is committed to conducting a prompt investigation for any allegation of harassment. If harassment has occurred, the individual will be disciplined in accordance with SMCPS policy. Disciplinary actions for students found to have engaged in any form of harassment may result in suspension or expulsion. For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit the Office of Civil Rights Complaint Assessment System for the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

Students, parents/legal guardians, and community members may report allegations of harassment to the School Title IX Coordinator at their school or to the District Title IX Coordinator, Department of Student Services, 23160 Moakley Street, Suite 104, Leonardtown, Maryland 20650, 301-475-5511, extension 32150.

Section 3 - Student Records

TYPES OF STUDENT RECORDS

All students have school records. The information in the record is needed and used by school staff, parent(s)/legal guardian(s), and the students themselves to plan educational and career programs. The complete school record is called the cumulative folder, but different parts of the cumulative folder may be kept in different places (i.e., health information, special education record, 504).

RIGHT TO INSPECT AND REVIEW A STUDENT'S EDUCATION RECORDS

All student records are maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") have the right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the date that the student's school receives the request for access. Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect the student's education records should submit a written request to the school principal (or appropriate school official) that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. Copies may be obtained at the cost of \$0.25/page.

RIGHT TO REQUEST THE AMENDMENT OF THE STUDENT'S EDUCATION RECORDS

Parents and eligible students have the right to request the amendment of the student's education records if they believe they are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to amend the student's education records should write to the school principal (or appropriate school official), clearly identify the part of the record that they want changed, and specify the reason why. The school will notify the parents or eligible student if it decides not to amend the record as requested, as well as advise the parents or eligible student of their right to request a hearing regarding their request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parents or eligible student.

THE PARENTAL/ELIGIBLE STUDENT CONSENT REQUIREMENT

School systems must obtain the consent of the parent/eligible student before disclosing personally identifiable information (PII) contained in the student's educational records, except to the extent FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school system as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member, or a person serving on the Board. A school official may also include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school system, performs a service or function for which the school system would otherwise use its own employees, and who is under the direct control of the school system with respect to the use and maintenance of the PII contained in students' educational records. This might include an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, or parent volunteer, etc. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review a student's educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

"Directory information" includes the following information relating to a student: the student's legal name, the most recent previous local school system or educational institution attended, and grade. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may seek to correct information that is believed to be inaccurate.

The school system and custodian of records, upon request of the military, must provide students' names, addresses, and telephone listings to military recruiters, unless the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have opted out of providing such information by [completing the Parental Opt Out Form](#) and returning it to school.

If parent(s)/legal guardian(s) do not want any or all of this directory information released, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) should make this request in writing to the school.

RIGHT TO FILE A COMPLAINT

The parent/eligible student has the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning an alleged failure by the school system to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SURVEYS

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who do not want their student to participate in certain surveys may opt their student out of participation. The Opt Out form may be obtained in the Forms section of this handbook.

USE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMS

As part of our overall educational program, students are occasionally asked to be photographed or videotaped or have their work displayed. Unless indicated to the contrary, the school will assume that your child may be photographed or videotaped by the news media or by St. Mary's County Public Schools' staff, and also that the student's likeness, name, performance, artwork, or written work may be used in print or broadcast media and/or on the Internet. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to complete the Parental "Opt Out" Form and return it to school.

St. Mary's County Public Schools cannot control photography, taping, or interviews of students at events that are open to the public, nor decisions by the news media to post school news on the Internet.

RETENTION OF RECORDS

Parts of the cumulative records are permanently retained because of the need to retrieve data for individuals who at some time have been enrolled in the county schools (outlined in the Maryland Student Records System Manual). These include records containing information concerning grades, courses taken, and diploma status. The rest of the cumulative file is destroyed when the student reaches his/her twenty-first birthday. Federal law requires six years of special education record maintenance after completion or withdrawal from school.

Section 4 – Student Rights and Responsibilities

STUDENT RIGHTS

A major goal of school systems in the United States is to prepare students for active, responsible participation in a democratic society. To develop an understanding and appreciation of our representative form of government, students need to participate in decision-making, exercise their rights and responsibilities as individuals, and educate themselves in the democratic process.

Students pursuing their rights must accept the associated responsibility of respecting the rights of others and of respecting legally constituted authority.

Assemble

Students have the right to assemble peacefully during non-instructional time provided that the gathering does not impede or disrupt the operation of the schools or the rights of others. Conducting and/or participating in demonstrations that interfere with the operations of the school or classroom or the basic rights of others is inappropriate and prohibited.

All students meeting in school buildings or on school grounds may do so only as a part of the formal educational process or as cooperatively established and approved by the principal of the school.

Strikes or boycotts of classes are not allowed.

Due Process

Prior to the removal of any protected property or liberty interest, such as a suspension from school, students have the right to due process as follows:

- the student must be given notice of the conduct which is required or prohibited;
- the student must be given notice of the specific allegations of misconduct;
- the student must be given some opportunity to respond to the allegations of misconduct; and
- the decision-making authority (e.g., the principal) will make a decision based upon the evidence available to the decision maker.

A basic element of due process is that one who is not satisfied with the decision may appeal it to a higher authority. Thus, a student may appeal a decision of a school staff member to the principal or the principal's decision to the designated director. The director's decision may be appealed to the Deputy Superintendent. The decision of the Deputy Superintendent may be appealed to the Superintendent of Schools, and the decision of the Superintendent of Schools/designee may be appealed to the Board of Education of St. Mary's County. Any decision of the Board of Education of St. Mary's County may be appealed to the Maryland State Board of Education.

Personal Safety

Students should be able to enjoy a school environment free from all forms of discrimination, including bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment.

Petition

Students have the right to present petitions setting forth grievances as long as they are free from obscenities and defamatory statements. Students need to use the channels provided for this purpose in each school. The collecting of signatures on petitions is not to disrupt classroom procedures; interfere with the educational process; or be obtained through threat, coercion, or physical force.

Students will not be subjected to disciplinary measures for properly initiating or signing a petition, nor will they be subject to any kind of overt or covert reprisal, harassment, or otherwise unwarranted response.

Religion

Students have the right to observe their own religious beliefs and practices in school as long as they do not violate the rights of others or interfere with school activities.

School-sponsored religious exercises may not be conducted. Schools will not advocate any religious beliefs. No school-sponsored activity or class will be religious in nature. Holiday concerts may include religious music within St. Mary's County Public Schools' guidelines. Courses may include information about different religions, religious practices and beliefs, and religious leaders if no religious viewpoints are advocated.

Distribution of religious material follows the guidelines outlined in Board Policy KHBA.

Students Involved with the Department of Juvenile Services

Students enrolled in the St. Mary's County Public Schools who, as a result of negative behavior in the community, are temporarily placed in a Juvenile Services funded or operated detention facility, or who are committed to a facility by the court, have the right to continue their education with as little disruption in program continuity as possible.

Students Seeking Help

The Board of Education of St. Mary's County believes that directing students to appropriate service agencies must be an integral part of a comprehensive service system. Students who seek counsel and assistance for substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, pregnancy, contraception, abortions, and mental/emotional disorders will be directed to appropriate agencies. Students who seek information from a teacher, counselor, principal, or other professional educator to overcome any form of drug abuse are protected by Maryland Public School Education Article 7-412. Any statement, written or oral, made by a student is not admissible against the student in any school disciplinary proceeding.

Students Who Do Not Seek Help

Those students who abuse or possess alcohol or drugs, or otherwise violate the law, and do not voluntarily seek help, in essence, forfeit their rights to the protection of Education Article 7-412. They are subject to the school policy and practice.

School staff must promptly report to a school administrator all delinquent acts that come to their attention - whether occurring on or away from the school premises - which involve students in the school system. The school administrator must then promptly report all such acts to the responsible law enforcement agencies.

School officials cannot ignore illegal substance abuse or other illegal activities. If a teacher, counselor, or principal finds a student bringing drug equipment to school, using or carrying drugs, or otherwise violating the law, the educator must observe the existing laws and enforce school policy. Once observed and reported to the school administrator, established procedures

will be implemented. Each case must be handled on its own merits and as determined by its own circumstances, within school system policy.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students have a responsibility to put forth their best efforts during the educational process.

Students have the responsibility to respect the rights of other students and all persons involved in the educational process.

Students have the responsibility not to harass or create a hostile environment on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability.

Students have the responsibility to attend school regularly and to observe school rules essential for permitting others to learn at school.

Responsibility for Student Conduct

Positive student conduct is essential to the total school program. Without it, students cannot realize opportunities for academic growth, and the school cannot discharge its responsibility in the educational process.

It is expected that students will do their best to conduct themselves according to the rules of the school.

We ask parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to reinforce the need for children to conduct themselves in appropriate ways when at school.

Good behavior is maintained through positive measures which are fair and consistent. Conferences involving school personnel, parent(s)/ legal guardian(s), and students are frequently held when problems arise. County policy regulates the actions which are to be followed in specific instances of major infractions.

Student Responsibility in Decision Making

As appropriate to the age of students, school government organizations, such as student councils, may be formed to offer practice in self-government and to serve as channels for the expression of student ideas and opinions to the Board of Education and school administration.

Each student has the responsibility and the right to participate in student government organizations.

One student, selected by the St. Mary's Associations of Student Councils, sits on the Board of Education as a non-voting member.

Student Responsibility for Dress

There is a close relationship between student dress and student behavior and, accordingly, proper dress is important to setting the pattern of school and social conduct.

While student dress and grooming are primarily the responsibility of students and their parent(s)/ legal guardian(s), the Superintendent of Schools shall direct staff to develop appropriate guidelines for a student dress code.

Dress or grooming which is likely to cause the disruption of the instructional program or which creates a potential safety hazard is prohibited.

Student Responsibility for School Property

Each student has a responsibility to appropriately care for school property. Students will be assessed for any lost, damaged, or vandalized school property.

Student Vehicle Use

Students are not permitted to operate or park any type of vehicle on a school campus without the approval of the school administrator. Annual parking permits are considered a privilege and may be revoked for academic, attendance, or behavioral infractions. Parking privileges may also be restricted due to outstanding student debt, per Policy JFI and Regulation JFI-R.

Student Bicycle Use

Bicycles are not permitted to be ridden or stored on a school campus without the approval of the school administrator.

Student Solicitations

The solicitation of funds in the schools by outside groups for any cause is discouraged. Such solicitation will require the approval of the school administration.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT DRESS CODE

Dress or grooming which causes or is likely to cause the disruption of the instructional program or which creates a potential safety or health hazard, as determined by the school principal or his/her designee, is prohibited.

Standards for appropriate attire and accessories shall include the following:

- Students must wear clothing that covers certain body parts and undergarments. Clothes must be worn in such a way that the chest, midriff, pelvic/groin area, and buttocks are covered with opaque material.
- Clothing displaying or suggesting profanity; sexual activity through graphic images, words, or innuendos; weapons; drugs/alcohol or drug paraphernalia; violence; or tobacco products may not be worn, visible, or displayed.
- Clothing with identifiable gang/crew representation or paraphernalia may not be worn, visible, or displayed.
- Symbols or messages generally accepted to promote intolerance, hate, racial slurs (for example, the Confederate flag, swastika, Ku Klux Klan, or KKK) may not be worn, visible, or displayed.
- Head coverings may only be worn indoors so long as the student's face is visible and it does not interfere with instruction or student safety. Ski masks may not be worn indoors.
- Shoes must be worn that are safe for all activities.
- Official St. Mary's County Public Schools' athletic uniforms may be allowed at the discretion of the coach and school administrator.
- Student dress for school-sponsored activities must be in compliance with the Student Dress Code.

It is recognized that age and maturity may be considered in determining the appropriateness of a student's attire. Appropriateness will be determined by the school principal/designee.

STUDENT RULES FOR TRANSPORTATION

The safety of students during their transportation to and from school is a responsibility which students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) share with bus drivers and school officials.

The bus driver has the responsibility of maintaining orderly behavior of students on school buses and will report misconduct to the appropriate school official.

State law prohibits unauthorized persons from coming aboard school buses. Bus drivers are not permitted to engage in discussions with non-passengers at bus stops. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are requested to contact the school their child attends to discuss any concerns that they may have with bus transportation.

St. Mary's County Public Schools' buses do not discharge or admit students at places of business other than licensed day care centers.

St. Mary's County Public Schools will transport only those students assigned to a bus unless an emergency exists. Day-by-day, special bus requests will be handled by the school administration on an individual basis, with discretion. The school administrator must complete a "Temporary Bus Pass" and give the white copy to the bus driver.

Bus stops are set by the Department of Transportation in accordance with safe practices, Maryland law, COMAR, Board policy, St. Mary's County Public Schools' regulations, and

Department of Transportation procedures. The location of all authorized school bus stops will be available online at <https://www.smcps.org/offices/transportation/bus-stop-and-school-locator> prior to the start of the school year. These are the only locations that St. Mary's County Public Schools buses will stop. School bus drivers, school bus contractors, and school staff members cannot add, delete, or change the location of school bus stops. All requests to add, delete, or change the location of school bus stops should be directed to the Department of Transportation.

A "Temporary Bus Pass" is required for new students or whenever students will be getting off at a stop other than their own, even if they are riding their assigned bus. Students with bus passes will only be dropped off at published bus stops.

The bus driver is in charge of the bus at all times. If a teacher is on the bus, the teacher is in charge of student behavior. For most students, riding the school bus is a privilege and not a right. Students violating the rules stated below will be reported to school officials. Transportation privileges may be withdrawn from violators.

- Students will be permitted to ride only the bus to which they are assigned and which serves the area in which they live. St. Mary's County Public Schools will transport only those students assigned to a bus unless approval is received from the site administrator/designee. Requests from students and/or their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) for the student to ride other buses will be decided on an individual basis by the school administrator.
- Students must be on time to meet the bus as it arrives at their pick-up point. All students must be at the bus stop five (5) minutes before the assigned bus stop time and prepared to board the bus. The bus will not wait for students, as this delays pick-up times at other stops.
- All students must wait off the roadway and approach the actual boarding location only after the bus stops with its red lights flashing. If the bus stop does not require the use of flashing lights, wait until the bus stops completely before boarding the bus.
- Students must not attempt to board or to disembark from the bus while it is in motion.
- Students must not extend their hands, arms, or heads out of the bus windows.
- Students may not exhibit any lewd gestures, pictures, or offending material from within the bus or from the bus windows.
- Students may not get off the bus on their way to or from school without the permission of the driver. The driver cannot give such permission except in case of personal emergency on the part of the student, or upon written request of the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) with approval of the school administrator.
- Students may talk in a normal manner. Loud, profane, or obscene language will not be permitted.
- Students will cooperate in keeping the bus clean. Any malicious or willful damage to a school bus will result in the immediate withdrawal of transportation privileges of the student or students involved. Transportation privileges may be withheld until the cost of repairing the damage has been satisfactorily settled.

- Students may not transport anything on the bus without the permission of the driver, with the exception of their books or other school supplies. Students may transport musical instruments as long as they are no larger than that which a student can hold on his/her lap or place at his/her feet. The instrument may not protrude into the aisle or occupy the seat space of another passenger. Other items, such as classroom projects, may be transported so long as the container size meets the same guidelines for storage as musical instruments. Glass containers and animals, including birds and insects, may not be transported.
- Students may not bring balloons on the bus. Balloons impair the driver's vision and, should they explode, result in distress and distraction to the bus driver and students.
- Students may not possess or use tobacco, electronic cigarettes, narcotics, or intoxicating beverages on the school bus.
- Students may not consume drinks (including water) or food on the school bus without permission from the bus driver.
- Students may not use electronic devices, which include cell phones and radios, without permission from the bus driver.
- Students using school bus transportation are under the jurisdiction of the school from the time that they board the bus until they disembark from the bus. When students are in view of the bus driver, they still can be held accountable by the school for any inappropriate actions. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are responsible for their student(s) while the student(s) is traveling to and from the bus stop and while the student(s) is waiting at the bus stop.

Student Bus Boarding Procedures

- Students crossing a roadway must wait for a signal from the bus driver before crossing.
- Students should have their belongings before leaving home to catch their bus. Students must board their bus at their regularly assigned bus stop.
- Students must leave home in ample time to catch the bus.
- Students should walk on the side of the road facing traffic to get to their stop if there is no sidewalk or path.
- Students should look both ways and make sure it is safe if they must cross the road or street to get to their bus stop.
- Students should wait in an orderly line or group, out of the way of traffic, until the bus stops and the driver opens the door.
- Students should wait until the bus stops before moving forward to board it.
- Students should use the grab rail and watch their step boarding the bus.

Student On-board Procedures

- Students should promptly walk to their assigned seat and sit down.
- Students must sit in their assigned seats unless directed otherwise by the bus driver.
- Students may not move from one seat to another seat while the bus is in motion.
- Students should sit on the bus seats facing forward, with their backs up against the back of the seat.

- Students should “buckle up” and utilize seat belts if they are available on the bus they are riding.
- Students should keep their legs, feet, books, etc., out of the aisle of the bus.
- Students should keep their arms, hands, and heads inside the bus.
- Students should talk softly so that the bus driver can hear any warning signals.
- Students should avoid unnecessary conversation with the bus driver.
- Students should not throw things from the windows or on the floor of the bus.
- Students should not call out from the windows.
- Students should know that the EMERGENCY DOOR HANDLE is to be used ONLY in an EMERGENCY. Students should not touch it at any other time.
- Students should know that if they damage any part of the bus, they will be held liable.
- Students should remain seated until their driver gives them instructions if the bus has mechanical trouble.
- Students should never sit in the driver's seat or tamper with any controls or equipment.

Student Bus Loading Procedures at School

- Students should walk in a quiet, orderly manner to their bus loading area.
- Students should wait in an orderly group.
- Students should stay away from the curb or driveway until the bus comes to a full stop and the driver opens the door. Then they should walk with caution to get on the bus.
- Students should not push, shove, or wrestle. Horseplay can result in a serious accident.
- Students should leave all dropped items where they are and ask an adult for assistance.

Student Bus Unloading Procedures

- Students should wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before getting out of their seat and moving forward to disembark.
- Students should disembark only at their assigned bus stop.
- Prekindergarten and kindergarten students will get off the bus first and will be met at the door by a responsible person at least 13 years old. Buses will not wait at the bus stop if there is not a responsible person at the bus door to take custody of the prekindergarten and/or kindergarten student. In this instance, the student will be returned to the school.
- Students should watch their step and hold on to the grab rail when disembarking the bus.
- Students should move away from the bus once off the bus. Students crossing in front of the bus should wait for the driver's signal and cross ten feet in front of the bus. If anything is dropped, students should leave the dropped items and ask an adult for assistance.
- Students should walk on the sidewalks, paths, or off the road after leaving the bus stop.
- Students should walk single file facing traffic if they must walk along the roadside.
- Students should go home promptly.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Transportation Procedures

To ensure safety, a responsible person (at least 13 years old) must be on time to meet the bus at the bus door at the assigned stop for Pre-Kindergarten and/or Kindergarten students. This applies to when a student is boarding the bus at the bus stop and when a student is disembarking the bus at the bus stop.

When a responsible person is not available to receive a Pre-Kindergarten and/or Kindergarten student on a return trip home, the driver will return the student to the school. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified by the principal/designee to come and pick up their child from the school. The school administrator will discuss this concern with the parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

If a second incident occurs, the child will be returned to the school and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified to pick up their child at school. The regulation will again be reviewed with the parent(s)/legal guardian(s). The school administrator will mail a follow-up letter to the family indicating that a third incident may result in loss of transportation privileges.

If a third incident occurs, the child will be returned to school. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified to pick up their child at school. Transportation privileges will be revoked at that time. A written notice will be mailed to the family by the principal.

Special Needs Transportation Procedures

- All special needs students must be on time to their designated bus stop.
- If required, a responsible person (at least 13 years old) must escort the special needs student to and from the bus when loading and unloading. If a responsible person is not present when unloading, the student will be returned to school. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be responsible for picking up the student from the school.
- Special needs bus drivers and attendants must remain near or on the bus at all times. They are not permitted to escort students to and from a student's home.
- Special needs buses are not authorized to enter onto private property; i.e., driveways, dirt roads, etc.

Emergency Transportation Procedures

During an emergency and/or accident, students need to adhere to the following procedures. Students should:

- Remain quiet so they can hear directions being given.
- Leave the bus, if told to do so, in an orderly fashion.
- Leave by the emergency door when directed to do so. The larger students should help the smaller students to the ground.
- Walk to a safe spot away from the bus. Remain in a group off the road.
- Report any injuries promptly to the driver, the police, or a rescue squad member.

Use Of Video and Audio Recording Devices on School Buses

Video and audio recording devices may be placed on any school bus providing services to St. Mary's County Public Schools at the request of the bus contractor, school administrator, or Director of Transportation. Placement of video and audio recording devices may also be made at the direction of the Superintendent of Schools or designee. The purpose of the video and audio devices will be to monitor behavior on the bus.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY TO BE INFORMED

Use of Security Cameras on School Grounds and in School Buildings

Security cameras for video surveillance are placed on school grounds and in school buildings at the direction of the Superintendent of Schools or designee. The purpose of video surveillance is to monitor activities occurring on a school campus and enhance the safety and security of the school building. All requests to view video surveillance footage must be made in writing to the Department of Safety and Security in a timely manner to ensure the footage is captured for future review.

Student Searches

Under Maryland Education Article 7-308, a principal or assistant principal of a public school may make a reasonable search of a student on the school premises or on a school-sponsored trip if he/she has a reasonable belief that the student has in his/her possession an item, the possession of which is a violation of any state law or a rule or regulation of the county board. On school-sponsored trips, a designated teacher may conduct a search.

A principal or assistant principal may also make a search of the physical plant of a school and its furnishings and equipment, including the lockers of the students.

Drug-Free Zones

Drug-Free Zones - It is a felony to manufacture, dispense, distribute, or possess with the intent to distribute certain controlled dangerous substances, or conspire to commit these offenses in or within 1,000 feet of any real property used for certain school purposes or in a school vehicle under certain circumstances.

The school system prohibits the possession and/or use of illegal substances on school grounds. This includes alcohol, cigarettes/tobacco products, cigarette lighters, e-cigarettes, vaporizers, matches, drugs, and drug look-alikes.

Canine Drug Scans of School Facilities

St. Mary's County Public Schools and the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office maintain an agreement for carrying out canine drug scans of school facilities and surrounding school

properties. The overall purpose of the scans is to protect and further ensure the safety of our students and staff and to be proactive in maintaining a drug-free environment in schools. The searches will be random, limited in scope, and not target any individual or faction, and conducted under the pre-eminence of student safety. The scans will include interior building scans completed during the school day at times of the day when students are not in the building or when students do not have access to hallways or other areas to be searched. Other designated areas may include exterior parking lots, athletics fields, building perimeters, common areas, and other sections of school facilities. The canines will not be used to search students or staff.

Possession or Use of Wireless Communication Devices

School personnel have the right to limit the use of electronic communication devices that impede the instructional climate in the school, create a disturbance, or disrupt the school environment.

Students may possess wireless communication devices as indicated below. For students who are permitted to possess cell phones at school, the devices must be kept out of sight and turned off from the time that students arrive until the time of dismissal (this includes transitions between classes) unless noted as an exception below. Cell phones will not be used for instructional purposes at any time during the school day.

Students are allowed to use cell phones only as described below:

1. Elementary students: Possessing cell phones is discouraged. They shall not be used at any time during the instructional day.
2. Middle school students: Cell phones may be carried by students, but they are to be off and not visible during the instructional day, including lunch and recess. Students will be permitted to access their cell phones at the end of the instructional day as directed by school staff.
3. High school students: Cell phones may be carried by students, but they are to be off and not visible during the instructional day. Students may access their cell phones during lunch. Students will be permitted to access their cell phones at the end of the instructional day as directed by school staff.

The appropriate use of cell phones is permitted on school buses subject to the SMCPs Student Code of Conduct.

Unauthorized photography and video recording of the school environment during the instructional day is a violation of school policy and established law. Illegal recording or capturing of any communication or image will result in disciplinary action and possible referral to law enforcement authorities when appropriate. For this reason, smartglasses are not permitted on SMCPs grounds or buses.

Students may use wireless communication devices, excluding smartglasses, during the instructional day under the following conditions:

- For medical reasons documented by a medical professional; and/or

- Students with disabilities documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

Any observed or reported improper use of a wireless communication device contrary to regulations shall result in confiscation of the device by the site administrator or designee. Action will be taken as per the SMCPs Student Code of Conduct.

When school staff reports a wireless communication device violation, the site administrator or designee will respond as per the SMCPs Student Code of Conduct.

The wireless communication device will be confiscated by an administrator or designee and stored in a safe and secure location.

If the site administrator or designee has reasonable suspicion to believe that the wireless communication device has been used in any way that violates local, state, or federal laws, the site administrator or designee will turn the device over to law enforcement authorities for further investigation.

If there is no law enforcement involvement, a student may retrieve a confiscated wireless communication device by having their parents/legal guardians respond to the school site during normal operating hours and request the device from the site administrator or designee.

St. Mary's County Public Schools assumes no liability for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items of any student, including wireless communication devices. The school system assumes no responsibility for injury or damage related to malfunctioning equipment. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students are encouraged to take special care of wireless communication devices brought to school.

Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation

Bullying - unwanted, demeaning behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or is highly likely to be repeated, over time. To be considered bullying, the behavior must be intentional and include: 1) an imbalance of power (students who bully use their physical, emotional, social, or academic power to control, exclude, or harm others), and 2) repetition (bullying behaviors happen more than once or are highly likely to be repeated based on evidence gathered).

Cyberbullying - bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through texting, apps, or online via social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or hurtful content about another student. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else, causing embarrassment or humiliation.

Harassment - intentional conduct, including physical conduct or verbal, written, or electronic communication, that creates a hostile educational environment and includes actual or perceived

negative actions that offend, ridicule, or demean another student with regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, family/parental or marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, or disability. Conduct must occur on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus, or must substantially disrupt the orderly operation of a school.

Intimidation - any communication or action directed against another student that threatens or induces a sense of fear and/or inferiority. Retaliation may be considered a form of intimidation.

Reports of bullying/harassment/intimidation may also be followed up by completing the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form. This form may be obtained from the school or in the Forms section of this handbook.

Gang Activity and Similar Destructive Behaviors

A criminal organization (gang) is a group or association of three or more persons whose members; individually or collectively engage in a pattern of criminal activity; have as one of their primary objectives or activities the commission of one or more underlying crimes, including acts by juveniles that would be underlying crimes if committed by adults; and have in common an overt or covert organizational or command structure. A pattern of criminal gang activity is the commission of, attempted commission of, conspiracy to commit, or solicitation of two or more underlying crimes or acts by a juvenile that would be an underlying crime if committed by an adult.

Gang activity and similar destructive behaviors are prohibited on school property, school buses, or at school-sponsored functions. Reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report gang activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior or who are victims, witnesses, bystanders, or others with reliable information about an act of gang activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior is also prohibited.

All school employees are required to report any incidents of suspected gang activity or similar destructive or illegal behavior promptly to the principal, who will in turn forward the report to the Director of Safety and Security for review. The principal and the Director of Safety and Security will take appropriate actions to maintain and ensure the safety and security of the school or campus environment.

Student discipline and remedial actions for students engaged in gang activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior or for students who have made false accusations will be consistently and fairly applied after timely and appropriate investigation, consistent with due process procedures. The student discipline will follow the St. Mary's County Public Schools' Code of Conduct for the ascertained violation.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Sexual harassment in school is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature from teachers, other adults, or students within school or school-related activities. The range of behaviors includes but is not limited to stalking, unwelcome sexual advances, verbal, nonverbal, and physical conduct of a sexual nature that does not rise to the level of sexual assault. Incidents of sexual harassment often worsen if not reported and stopped.

Sexual assault is understood as any unwelcome sexual contact, either directly or through clothing, which is committed by threat or by force and without the consent of the other person, including but not limited to physical sexual attack on an adult or a student. The range of behaviors includes but is not limited to: deliberate inappropriate touching/pinching/grabbing of a sexual nature, attempted rape, or rape.

Victims of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual assault should report the problem to an adult. The adult will then work with the student to see that appropriate action is taken. A student or the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may appeal the decision of a school staff member to the principal and the principal's decision to the Director of Student Services with regard to discipline assigned to that student. Situations evoking Title IX will be addressed through the SMCPs Title IX Grievance Process. The Supervisor of School Counseling has the responsibility for Title IX in St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Bringing or Possessing a Weapon

The possession of a weapon by any student or individual on school property, at a school-sponsored event, or on school buses, greatly increases the risk of danger to all students and staff members.

A weapon is defined as:

- Any object which reasonably could cause physical harm or injury to a person; or an object which is represented to be (and a reasonable person would conclude) a dangerous weapon, and for which there is no reasonable or legitimate cause for the student to bring, possess, or use on the property of St. Mary's County Public Schools.
- Any firearm of any kind, whether loaded or unloaded, operable or inoperable, and including "ghost" guns or any object which is a look-alike of a firearm, even though incapable of operation.
- Any weapon that will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive.
- The frame or receiver of any weapon described above.
- Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer.
- Any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas.
- Any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device as described in preceding examples, and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

Other weapons may also include, but are not limited to:

Firecrackers (including but not limited to: firecrackers, smoke bombs, Roman candles, and showering cones); weapon look-alikes, and similar devices including knives of any kind (including, but not limited to: a switchblade knife, a star knife, a dirk knife, a hunting knife); a straight razor, a spiked glove, a spiked wristband, or a spiked ring; metal knuckles; a nunchaku or any other sharp instrument shaped, sharpened, or designed in such a way as can injure, maim, cut, or puncture; explosive devices (bullets, shells without a weapon, ammunition); or tear gas, defensive spray, tasers, stun guns, or other disabling agents.

The bringing of any weapon or firearm onto school property or to a school-sponsored event, or the possession of any weapon on school property or at a school-sponsored event, shall be reported to law enforcement authorities, Superintendent of Schools or designee, the Director of Student Services, and the Director of Safety and Security immediately.

Under certain circumstances, the Gun Free School Act of 1994 and other public laws require expulsion from school for a period of not less than one calendar year for any student in possession of a firearm on school property.

In addition, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) need to know what their students bring to school. Some items can cause harm or disrupt the learning environment. These items include, but are not limited to, butter knives, laser pointers, instant bonding glues, or sharp tools. These types of items are not allowed at school, and if brought to school, may be considered a violation of school rules and may result in disciplinary action. If a common item or any implement is brought to school with the intent to cause harm, the item may be considered as an “other weapon.” In this case, the student may be subject to disciplinary action that would result in suspension or expulsion with a report made to law enforcement.

TOBACCO FREE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The State Board of Education adopted Tobacco-Free School Environment Regulation (COMAR 13A.02.04.01 - .07) requiring each school system to maintain a tobacco-free school environment. The sale and use of tobacco in any form is prohibited by anyone at all times (24 hours a day, every day) in all St. Mary's County Public Schools' buildings whether owned or leased. This includes schools, central offices, warehouses, garages, or other buildings operated by St. Mary's County Public Schools regardless of whether or not students are present.

In addition, the sale and use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on school grounds (to include e-cigarettes and vaporizers) by anyone at all times (24 hours a day, every day) on all St. Mary's County Public Schools' grounds whether owned or leased.

The sale and use of tobacco in any form is prohibited at all times in all school system vehicles (to include e-cigarettes and vaporizers) including school buses, whether owned by the school system or contracted.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT LITERATURE

Students desiring to post or distribute free literature that is not officially recognized as a school publication should submit the material to the principal for review and approval prior to distribution.

Students who violate this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Section 5 - Student Discipline

GENERAL STATEMENT

A primary task of the school is to create an appropriate learning environment for all students. The responsibility of creating an educational setting which meets the needs of each student belongs to all members of the school community.

Order is essential to instruction and to learning. Disorder cannot be tolerated. Individuals or groups who behave in disruptive or lawless ways erode the teaching-learning process and diminish the quality of service the school is able to provide.

To establish and maintain order, schools implement the policies and procedures of the school system. School disciplinary strategies are designed to develop a sense of direction, self-discipline, and respect for the needs and rights of others. Self-discipline is achieved when students acquire and exhibit behavior appropriate to their age and maturity level.

Students who choose to violate school conduct standards, engage in illegal acts, and generally make poor choices may impact their future educational and employment options. School representatives may be required to provide recommendations for employment and information for security clearances. That request from employers or colleges might include information about suspensions and expulsions.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY PLAN

Each school shall develop and implement a positive disciplinary plan. This plan should include sequential, progressive steps which involve appropriate school system personnel and parent(s)/legal guardian(s). Where necessary, the use of exclusion/restraint may be used to ensure the protection of student/staff safety.

A student referred for disciplinary action shall receive oral or written notice of the reason(s) for his/her referral and shall have the opportunity to present his/her side of the story before any disciplinary action is taken.

IN-SCHOOL INTERVENTION

Students may be assigned to in-school intervention (ISI) in lieu of suspension from school for nonviolent, less serious offenses. Students assigned to in-school intervention will report to the In-School Intervention Center (ISIC) as appropriate, will be supervised by the school staff, and will be provided applicable school work and instruction. Failure to report to the ISIC or comply with ISIC rules will result in additional ISIC time or suspension from school.

STUDENT SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Suspension is the temporary removal of any student from school. Expulsion is the exclusion of a student from the students' regular school program for 45 school days or longer.

St. Mary's County Public Schools makes many efforts to provide students a safe and orderly school environment. Disruption of school activities is considered a violation of school policies, rules, and regulations and may result in a student's in-school intervention, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. A principal may suspend a student for up to ten (10) school days. At the request of a principal, the superintendent's designee may suspend students for more than ten (10) school days or expel them (Student Code of Conduct).

The suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities will be reviewed by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team with respect to their disability and individualized education program. The school administrator must also follow the guidelines that pertain to the suspension and expulsion of students with a 504 Plan.

ALTERNATIVES TO EXPULSION

As an alternative to expulsion, students may be assigned to an alternative educational program. The purpose of this program is to provide students with an opportunity to modify their behavior to the degree that it becomes acceptable in a regular school setting.

STUDENT READMISSION AFTER A LONG-TERM SUSPENSION, EXTENDED SUSPENSION, OR EXPULSION

The duration of a long-term suspension, extended suspension, or expulsion is outlined at the conference. A written agreement on the conditions of readmittance may be required and include such conditions as attendance, grades, and discipline.

When a student is allowed to return after a long-term suspension, extended suspension, or expulsion, there is usually a written agreement on the conditions of readmittance that may include, but not be limited to:

- The student will attend regularly and will comply with attendance regulations.

- The student will make a reasonable effort to work to the best of his/her ability in all classes at all times.
- The student will abide by all school rules, regulations, and procedures to prevent disciplinary action.

LOSS OF SCHOOL BUS RIDING PRIVILEGES

The safety of students during their transportation to and from school is a responsibility which they and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) share with bus drivers and school officials.

Students using school bus transportation are under the jurisdiction of the school from the time that they board the bus until they disembark from the bus. While off the bus and when students are in view of the bus driver, they can still be held accountable by the school for any inappropriate actions.

The bus driver has the responsibility of maintaining orderly behavior of students on school buses and will report misconduct to the appropriate school official.

The school principal has the authority to suspend the riding privileges of students who are involved in disciplinary problems on the bus. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of children whose behavior and misconduct on school buses endangers the health, safety, and welfare of other riders will be notified that their children face the loss of school bus riding privileges in accordance with Bus Misbehavior (Student Code of Conduct).

Students whose school bus privileges have been suspended may not ride any public school bus in St. Mary's County during the period of suspension. This includes buses to and from school, to and from the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center, program trip buses, and sports buses.

Section 6 - School Information

ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES

St. Mary's County Public Schools' start and end times vary for each school. Please refer to the [School Times Report](#) on the SMCPDS Department of Transportation Website for the schedule of each school.

Walkers and students who are not transported by the bus are not to arrive at school any earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of the school day. Staff members are not available to supervise students prior to this time. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who wish to transport students home from school should pick them up no later than 15 minutes after the end of the school day.

When it is necessary for a student to leave school early or be transported by other means, please follow these procedures:

- Write a note for the school office stating the date, time of departure, and who will be signing the student out from the school office.
- In all cases, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or designated person must show photo identification in order to sign a student out of his/her school.
- The teacher will be notified to send the student to the office to leave school.

Should there be a circumstance in which a spouse or former spouse is prohibited from picking up the student, school personnel must have a copy of the court order for the student's file.

Elementary

Students may not stay after dismissal time without prior permission. In the event of special school programs or school-approved community programs, students who remain must present a note stating:

- Student's name
- Date(s)
- Reason for staying after school
- Time of pick up
- Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' signature

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are responsible for and must pick up their child(ren) at the designated time.

Secondary

On most days, classroom teachers are available after school to help students. Students should be encouraged to seek extra help during this time. Transportation must be arranged for and approved in advance by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and the school administration.

Students who remain after school for activities, discipline, and/or extra help in their subjects must have a permission form signed by parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

Teacher supervision will continue until the last student has been released to the parent(s)/ legal guardian(s). Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are expected to pick up their student immediately after the end of the activity.

Written permission from parent(s)/legal guardian(s) is the preferred process to allow students to remain after school for an activity. In some instances, phone permission or email from the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may be approved by the principal or assistant principal.

ACCEPTABLE USE

Students are provided computer access privileges to facilitate their learning. These educational resources include access to the Internet, Google Workspace for Education, online learning platforms, eBooks, and electronic educational resources.

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) recognizes that access to and use of the Internet is an appropriate tool for instruction. Precautions are taken to attempt to ensure that the Internet is a safe learning environment for students. In accordance with the SMCPS Network Usage Standards, all use of the network and email communications must be in support of education, research, and professional usage that is consistent with the purposes of St. Mary's County Public Schools. In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), SMCPS utilizes filtering software in an attempt to block access to objectionable material. Students will be supervised while using the Internet at or on school property and will be instructed in the appropriate and safe use, selection, and evaluation of information. Per COMAR, opting out of curriculum-based resources is not an option.

Our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) includes detailed information that outlines the student's responsibilities when accessing the internet and using their SMCPS-issued device. The AUP can be accessed [here](#). Additionally, all families must complete the Google Workspace for Education *Additional Services Agreement form* each year. This agreement grants students access to services that are not considered Google's core services, such as YouTube, Google Maps, etc.

Violations: The use of computer systems in school and access to the Internet is a privilege. Consequences for unacceptable use of the computer systems may result in the denial of access privileges and be held to the consequences in the Student Code of Conduct.

Violation of the policy may be a violation of law, civil regulations, or the SMCPS Code of Student Conduct. Should a student violate the policy, access to hardware, software, or the Internet may be suspended, school disciplinary action may be taken, and/or appropriate legal action may result.

CAREER COUNSELING PROGRAM

The Career Counseling Program assists students with:

1. acquiring skills to investigate the world of work and gain knowledge of self to make informed career decisions; and
2. understanding the relationship between personal qualities, educational preparation, and career planning

The career counseling program, in partnership with the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland and the College of Southern Maryland, provides middle and high school students a foundation for academic and career planning. Career Advisors hold classroom, small group, and individual career conversations with students to assist them in developing career pathways that reflect their interests, personality traits, and values.

FOCUS ON CYBER USE AND SAFETY (F.O.C.U.S.) INITIATIVE

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) maintains partnerships to initiate and implement a Three Point Plan to Focus On Cyber Use and Safety (FOCUS). The plan includes:

- All SMCPS' elementary school students will receive cyber safety instruction through lessons presented by the media specialist,
- All SMCPS' secondary school students will receive instruction through student assemblies and/or school-based programs in collaboration with the media specialist, and
- SMCPS will reinforce the importance of cyber safety through public forums.

Additional information is available on the SMCPS' Department of Safety and Security website <https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security/student-risk-behavior>

ELIGIBILITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Fall eligibility will be determined by the prior year's overall GPA, including summer school marks.

In order to be academically eligible to participate in after-school activities in high school, students in grades nine through twelve must maintain a G.P.A. of at least 2.0. Summer School credit will apply in the application of the eligibility code. Incoming ninth graders are eligible until the first marking period grades come out, at which time they will lose eligibility if their G.P.A. is not at least 2.0.

Any exceptions or appeals to the student eligibility code must be submitted in writing to the school principal within one week of the distribution of report cards or final grades. Any appeal of the high school principal's decision should be directed to the Superintendent of Schools within ten (10) days of the high school principal's decision.

Students receiving special education services or students with a 504 Plan may be exempted by the school Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team or the 504 Team when it is determined that failure to meet the eligibility requirement is a result of the nature and severity of the student's disability.

Students in grades nine through twelve who achieve a G.P.A. of 2.0 or higher may participate without restrictions, as long as they maintain their G.P.A. at this level, and do not become ineligible for one of the following reasons:

1. Absence from school. A student must be present for at least half of the school day. In extenuating circumstances, an exception may be approved by the principal.
2. Suspension from school. A student remains ineligible until reinstated by the principal and has attended classes for at least one school day.
3. In-school intervention. A student assigned in-school intervention is ineligible on the day(s) of the assignment.

FEES/CHECKS/CASH

The school will accept checks from parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) for field trips, books, pictures, fees, equipment, and other school functions. Electronic payment via MySchool Bucks is an option for most school-based fees.

Students will be charged a nominal rental fee yearly for music equipment. A fee will be assessed for lost or damaged school materials and equipment, to include laptops, chargers, textbooks, music instruments, and athletic equipment. Repairs due to a student's intentional damage or destruction of school property will be assessed to the student.

Checks are to be made out to the school or as indicated. Post-dated checks may not be accepted. Fees will be assessed for returned checks.

If parent(s)/legal guardian(s) do not wish to write a check, cash may be sent with the student. The cash should be placed in an envelope or wrapped in some way and marked with the student's name and room number, amount, and its purpose. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) should make every effort to try to send the exact amount.

Students should not bring money to school except for a school-related special purpose.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are carefully planned and specifically related to the classroom instructional program. Each trip is designed for a certain grade-level student. While we appreciate parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' time and help as volunteers, we cannot honor requests that younger children (in or out of school) be allowed to accompany parent(s)/legal guardian(s) on field trips.

FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Food and Nutrition Services is committed to serving students and staff nutritious and flavorful meals, while providing nutrition education and acting as advocates for student health. St. Mary's County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services participates in the National School Lunch Program approved by the Maryland State Department of Education. This program offers breakfast and lunch meals that meet the nutritional guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture. These meals are available for purchase at our cafeterias along with a la carte and snack items.

Students may qualify for free or reduced-price meals. To determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, please obtain and submit an application for free or reduced-price meals. Paper applications can be obtained at school sites. Online applications are also available at www.smcps.org/dss/food-services/meal-benefit-information. Please submit one application for your entire household and include any foster children. Return your completed form to the

student's school office. Call the Department of Food and Nutrition Services at (301) 475-4256, ext. 5 if you need help completing this form.

Our cafeterias operate a computerized point-of-sale system. This system utilizes the student's identification number and the student's photo to identify students paying for their meals. Students may pay for their meal with cash or a personal check. Money may be placed on their account electronically by adding funds using MySchoolBucks. A MySchoolBucks account may be set up by visiting www.myschoolbucks.com. The website may also be used to set up automatic replenishment of your student's account and to view cafeteria purchases made by your student. There is no charge for using this service. Please visit the Food Services website for [meal prices](#) and to familiarize yourself with the "Unpaid Meal Charges Policy" regarding insufficient funds to your student's account and the "Student Account Balance Policy" that refers to the refund of positive balances. Also listed are the current meal prices. For [daily menus, allergy, and nutritional information](#), please visit the Food Services website.

If there is an unscheduled early dismissal day due to inclement weather or an emergency condition, your Pre-Kindergarten student may have a delayed departure from school and will be offered the lunch meal. This may create a negative balance on your student's meal account that will need to be paid. Placing money on your Pre-Kindergarten students' account will ensure there are sufficient funds to cover this meal.

GRADING POLICY

Elementary

The evaluation of student progress is a continuous process. It involves many evaluative activities which are an integral part of the learning experience. Students are evaluated on their progress on the standards in which they are being instructed. The teacher completes the standard-based report card based on teacher observation, classroom performance, formative and summative assessment data.

Secondary

The grading system consists of letter grades based on a numerical percentage grading scale.

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grade	Percentage**
A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%

C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	0%-59%

**All percent scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. Anything below .5 rounds down and anything .5 and above rounds up.

HOME ACCESS CENTER (HAC)

Home Access Center (HAC) is a web-based communication link between school and home. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may view report cards, school transcripts, class schedules, attendance records, and discipline reports for the purpose of providing educational guidance to their children. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be provided with a username and password upon request and with proper identification. If you are having problems with your username, password, or login, please contact your school.

SCHOOLGY

Schoology is the Learning Management System used by SMCPS. Schoology helps to keep students and parent(s)/guardian(s) informed of the nature of assignments being given, due dates, and student performance. Schoology allows students to access resources and school materials online, at any time. All students have access to Schoology, but it is primarily used in grades 6-12.

HOMEWORK

Homework is assigned to supplement or reinforce classroom teaching and learning. Homework may be assigned for practice, to strengthen new skills, to complete unfinished classroom assignments, and to work on projects or guided reading activities begun in each class. The frequency of assignments will depend upon the nature of the subject, the content being studied, the grade level, and the learning objective. If you have questions regarding specific homework assignments, please direct them to your child's teacher.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Elementary and Middle

Students participate in the following programs, taught by specialists, as part of their regular daily instruction:

- Art, Grades K-8*

- Library Media, Grades K-5
- Music, Grades K-8*
- Physical Education, Grades K-8

*Students are given a choice of Fine Arts on their schedules in grades 6, 7, and 8.

Instruction for Pre-Kindergarten students in the areas of art, media, music, and physical education can be provided by the classroom teacher or by specialists.

Secondary

Information related to the instructional program for high school students is available in the High School Program of Studies. The Program of Studies can be found on the SMCPs website.

INSURANCE

St. Mary's County Public Schools does not provide medical payment coverage for student accidents that occur during school-related activities. The school system has selected and made available to parent(s)/legal guardian(s), on a voluntary basis, student accident insurance coverage to provide affordable coverage options. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are encouraged to take advantage of purchasing such coverage for their children. At the beginning of each school year, information will be sent home with each student stating several types of coverage options available and the premium cost per student. Anyone who wishes to purchase one of the insurance coverage options will be able to do it online directly with the insurance carrier.

St. Mary's County Public Schools does not carry insurance that covers lost or stolen personal items of any student, including musical instruments. You and your child are encouraged to take special care of musical instruments and/or personal items that are brought to school. St. Mary's County Public Schools advises parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to check their homeowner's or renter's insurance to see if their policy covers such loss.

LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER

Elementary

The library/media center has an open circulation policy. The privilege of its use carries with it the responsibility of care for the materials and promptness of their return. All media centers in SMCPs use Destiny for book checkout. Overdue notices are sent out periodically to students and their parents/guardians and detail the items the student has checked out from the media center. A borrower is held responsible for damaged and lost materials. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified about any debt due to the school. Overdue and fine notices will be generated and emailed from Destiny.

Secondary

All students are afforded the opportunity to use the library/media center on a regular basis. All media centers in SMCPs use Destiny for book check out. Overdue notices are sent out periodically to students and their parents/guardians and detail the items the student has checked out from the media center. This check-out system maintains an up-to-date borrowing record for each student.

Fines are not charged for overdue books, but materials that are not returned or are severely damaged must be paid for in full. Overdue and fine notices will be generated and emailed from Destiny.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students with lawful absences/tardies are allowed to receive full credit for any make-up work. They are also allowed to make up and take alternative exams/tests. It is the responsibility of the student and/or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to request the make-up work and turn in completed assignments within five (5) school days upon return to school from the absence or in an agreed-upon time period as determined by the school principal or designee. If a student who is lawfully absent fails to make up work within this timeframe, he or she will receive a grade of zero for the assignment(s). Refer to SMCPs Board Regulation JHCG-R for information related to pregnant and parenting students.

Students who are unlawfully absent will have the opportunity to make up the work, but they will forfeit the opportunity to earn credit for the work.

ONE LUNCH PROGRAM

High schools will offer the "one lunch" program whenever feasible. Under this model, all students receive a 30-minute lunch period. They can use the remaining 30 minutes of the one-hour block to attend clubs, join activities, meet with groups, or access school academic support.

School staff has the ability to determine the location where students report for lunch, whether students are able to participate in the 30-minute activity time, and which activities they can attend. Furthermore, staff may assign students to specific locations for target supports or interventions based on their academic performance, grades, attendance, and disciplinary needs.

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/legal guardian/teacher conferences are an essential part of the school/parent communication process. A conference may be initiated by either the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or school personnel. The conference should afford an opportunity for sharing information to promote the welfare and achievement of the student.

All conferences should be scheduled in advance, when possible.

PARTIES

School parties are to be kept to a minimum. Generally, observances are held for certain holidays. Other parties should be held only with the permission of the appropriate school personnel. Due to food allergy and food safety concerns, all food brought to school for students to consume, excluding individual student lunches, or as provided by SMCPs Food Services, shall be commercially prepared and packaged to include an ingredient list.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Elementary

Personal property (coats, jackets, lunch boxes, etc.) should always be clearly identified with the student's name. Items not related to the instructional program should remain at home unless the student has received permission from the classroom teacher to share the item with classmates. Valuable items such as expensive electronics, watches, and jewelry, or large sums of money should not be brought to school. The school is not responsible for lost or damaged property.

Secondary

Students, with the advice of parent(s)/legal guardian(s), should carefully select the personal property that is brought to school. Valuable items such as expensive electronics, watches, and jewelry, or large sums of money should not be brought to school. The school is not responsible for lost or damaged property.

PETS/ANIMALS

The study of animals may be included in the instructional program of some students. For safety and health reasons, animals are not to be brought to school without prior permission from the school administrator. Animals may not be transported on school buses.

PHONE MESSAGES/EMAIL

In order to minimize interruptions during the school day, calls to teachers will be accepted by office personnel and the messages given to teachers, except for emergency situations. Every effort will be made to respond to your communication within 24 hours.

PROMOTION/RETENTION

Students' progress shall be monitored throughout the school year and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shall be notified of unsatisfactory progress at the earliest indication.

The final responsibility for decisions regarding promotion and retention of elementary and middle school students rests with the principal, after consultation with teachers and parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

High school students must earn the appropriate number of credits to be promoted to the next grade level.

REPORT CARDS

Elementary standards-based report cards are issued four times a year. Please review these reports carefully and discuss them with your child. If you have questions about the report, contact the school to schedule a conference. The System Operational Calendar provides the dates for report card distribution. Secondary report cards are issued four times a year. Please review these reports carefully and discuss them with your child. If you have any questions about the report, contact the school to schedule a conference. The System Operational Calendar provides the dates for report card distribution.

SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Elementary

The school counseling program provides services to students, their families, and school staff that are intended to facilitate the personal and academic growth of all students, ensure the development of effective educational and career decision-making skills, and promote the development of appropriate interpersonal skills among all students.

School Counselors are available to assist students in:

- acquiring skills, attitudes, and knowledge to succeed in school
- employing strategies to succeed in school

- understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work, life at home, and in the community
- understanding the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work
- acquiring attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others
- understanding safety and survival skills.

Students are encouraged to meet and talk with their counselors whenever the need occurs. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are encouraged to discuss with the counselor their child's educational and career planning, as well as any concerns they have about their child's progress. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are also encouraged to attend conferences and other programs offered at their child's school. Effective communication as concerns arise may prevent difficulties at a later date.

Secondary

The school counseling program provides services to students, their families, and school staff that are intended to facilitate the personal and academic growth of all students, ensure the development of effective educational and career decision-making skills, and promote the development of appropriate interpersonal skills among all students.

School Counselors are available to assist students in:

- acquiring skills, attitudes, and knowledge to succeed in school
- understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work
- acquiring the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions
- understanding the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and career planning
- acquiring attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others

Students are encouraged to meet and talk with their counselors whenever the need occurs. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are encouraged to discuss with the counselor their child's educational and career planning, as well as concerns they have about their child's progress. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are also encouraged to attend conferences and other programs offered at their child's school.

YOUNG DRIVERS SAFETY PROGRAM

The safety and education of young drivers is a priority in St. Mary's County. St. Mary's County Public Schools will reinforce safe driving through student activities, media releases, and public service announcements.

Students requesting a parking permit at a high school:

- must view a presentation addressing young driver high risk behavior,
- must sign a safe driving contract, and
- are required to attend a student assembly about safe driving and traffic safety

For more information about this and other prevention programs and additional resources please visit <https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security/student-risk-behavior>

SUPPLIES

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be asked to provide supplies for their child(ren). Requested materials may differ by grade and by teacher.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF STUDENT RESOURCES

The St. Mary's County Public School System assigns resources for all public school students. Student resources can be defined as textbooks, laptops, iPads, novels, workbooks, etc. SMCPs uses Destiny Resource Manager to track all student resources issued to a student and school. Student resources are checked out to students through the media center. Once resources are issued to a student, it becomes the student's responsibility to care for the resources and technology device(s). If a student loses or damages a checked-out resource, it is the student's responsibility to pay the associated fine(s). The school must be reimbursed for lost or damaged resources.

When a loss/damage is confirmed, fines are assessed through Destiny Resource Manager. For any lost student resources, students/families will receive debt letters generated and sent via email from Destiny. Those in receipt of these letters will work with their school-based staff to reconcile this debt for lost or damaged resources. These assorted debts will be linked to students throughout their SMCPs career until the debt issue is resolved. Certain student activities and privileges may be restricted when a student has incurred debt. Please refer to Policy JFI and Regulation JFI-R for more details.

Detailed information on accountability, pricing of damaged technology, and care and liability can be found on our student accountability document located at: <https://bit.ly/smcpstudent>.

VISITORS

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and community participation in schools is important and valued. In addition to serving as a resource for teachers and students, it indicates that parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and community members are interested in and committed to the educational process. These visits also build understanding and confidence in our schools. We encourage parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and community visits and assistance whenever possible.

When planning a visit, it is requested that you call the school to arrange a convenient time. In order to minimize disruption to students' learning, we ask that you please refrain from bringing other children when you visit.

For the safety of our students, all visitors must report to the office and sign in upon entering the school and before visiting a classroom.

Visitors are expected to be considerate of the school and community expectations and ideals. These expectations include appropriate dress and demeanor. Clothing displaying or suggesting profanity, sexual activity, weapons, alcohol, or violence should not be worn. Language and actions should demonstrate respect for the educational environment and the community. Visitors are in a position to set a positive example for students to follow.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer service to our schools supports student learning. SMCPs strives to encourage volunteerism in our schools. A background screening is required of all volunteers to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. For more information about becoming a school volunteer and volunteer resources, please visit

<https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security/volunteer-sign-up>

If the activity of a volunteer organization will affect or alter the school facilities, a "Building and Grounds Modification Form" must be submitted and approved before any alterations can begin. Please visit <https://sites.google.com/smcps.org/buildingandgroundsmodification/home> for a copy of this form.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who plan to withdraw their child from school should inform the school two days prior to the departure date. Students must obtain a Maryland state form (SR 7) from the office on the morning of the withdrawal. No student can be considered withdrawn until the withdrawal form is returned, all fines and fees are paid (excluding McKinney-Vento students), and a request for records has been received from the school in which the student enrolls.

End-of-the-year promotions and final report cards will not be issued prior to the end of the school year.

SECTION 7 - CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct can be found in the following locations:

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uHyWJTRMfg2n2ep7w5M9aA9FWK2AU_iBOm0nqD0s0s/edit?usp=sharing
- <https://studenthandbook.smcps.org/code-of-conduct>

Forms & Resources

These forms can also be found on the Student Services Website or through the links provided below:

[Bullying/Harassment Form](#)

[Bullying/Harassment Form \(Spanish version\)](#)

[Medication Order Form \(PS 109\)](#)

[Parent Opt Out Form](#)

[Direct Link to Google Additional Services Permission Form](#)

[Google Permission \(English\)](#)

[Google Permission \(Spanish\)](#)

[Acceptable Use Policy \(English\)](#)

[Acceptable Use Policy \(Spanish\)](#)

For more information, check out: <http://www.smcps.org/ss>

St. Mary's County Public Schools 23160 Moakley Street Leonardtown, MD 20650

[Accessibility](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Equal Opportunity](#) | [Public Information Act Requests](#)