WINSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
PROVIDA FUTURI
EST. 1908

STUDENT HANDBOOK
2026-2027

SYSTEM MISSION

Our mission is to create excellence in providing youth with the encouragement, peer networks, and leadership skills necessary for them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and begin a life-long journey of leadership and service in the 21st century.

Dear Students and Parents:

Welcome to the Winston County School System. This handbook is designed to make you aware of policies and procedures under which our school system operates. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with its contents so that together we can meet the educational needs of your child.

The administration, faculty, and staff look forward to another great year.

Respectfully,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance 4
- Philosophy of Attendance 4
- Compulsory Attendance for All Students 4
- Absence from School 4
- Excused Absence 4
- Unexcused Absences 5
- Tardiness to School 6
- Instructional Expectations 6
- Make-Up Work 6
- Absences Due to Out of School Suspension 7
- Checking Students Out of School 7
- Away from School Due to School-Sponsored Activities 7
- Student-Athlete Attendance 7
- Truancy 7
- Virtual School Attendance Requirements 8
- Perfect Attendance Award 9

Nine Week/Semester Exams 9
Student Conduct 9
- Parent's Responsibility for Child's Conduct 10
- Parent's Responsibility for Damage to School Property 11
- Use of Cars on Campus 11
- Students Leaving School Campus 11
- No Fight Policy 12
- Classification of Offenses/Administrative Responses 12

Alternative School 17
Dress Code 18
Electronic Communication Devices 20
Tobacco, Nicotine, Vapes, and Related Items 21
Procedure for Early Arrival and Late Departure of Children 22
Transportation 22
Meals 24
Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) 24
Response to Intervention (RTI) Plan 24
Special Education Services 24
Child Find 24
Mental Health/Opt-In Option 25
Jamari Williams Protocol 25
Gifted Program 25
Winston County Schools Promotion and Retention 25
Valedictorian/Salutatorian Requirements 26
Graduation Requirements 26
Health Related Services 27
Technology 27
Lockers 28
Textbooks 28
Fire/Tornado/Lock Down Drills 28
Student Athlete Eligibility 28
Student Drug Testing Program 28
Asbestos Update 29
Nondiscrimination Policy 29
Acknowledgment 30

Attendance – (Alabama Attendance Law)

Every child between the ages of six and 17 years shall be required to attend a public school, private school, church school, or be instructed by a competent private tutor. Admission to public school shall be on an individual basis on the application of the parents, legal custodian, or guardian of the child to the local board of education at the beginning of each school year, under such rules and regulations as the board may prescribe. The parent, legal custodian, or guardian of a child who is six years of age, may opt-out of enrolling their child in school at the age of six years by notifying the local school board of education, in writing that the child will not be enrolled in school until he or she is seven years of age. Authority: Ala. Code §16-28-1, §16-28-3 and §16-28-7(1975) as amended by Alabama Act No: 2014-245

Philosophy of Student Attendance

The Winston County Board of Education believes good student attendance enhances learning. When a student is not in school, he/she misses valuable instructional time. For this reason, the Board equates attendance with academic achievement and establishes policies and procedures designed to encourage and require students to be in school.

Compulsory Attendance for All Students

Every child between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17) shall be required to attend school. Any student enrolled in the Winston County School System is required to be in school each day, regardless of the student's age. All students enrolled in the Winston County School System are subject to the regulations of this policy.

Absence from School (Code of Alabama (1975) § 16-28-15)

Every parent or custodian of any child required to attend school, shall, within two school days, explain the cause of any absence of the child. Failure to furnish an explanation shall be admissible as evidence of the child being truant. A good cause or valid excuse explanation is outlined below:

Excused Absence

A student shall be excused for absence from school for the following reasons:

1. A student is too ill to attend school;
2. Inclement weather that would be dangerous for students to attend school as determined by the Superintendent of Schools or principal;
3. Legal requirements or legal quarantine;
4. Death in the immediate family;
5. Emergency conditions as determined by the Superintendent of Schools or principal;
6. The absence with the prior permission of the principal or a designee and consent of parent/guardian.

Forms of excused absences may include the following:

PE – Parent Excuse

A maximum of seven (7) daily absences for the **school year** shall be coded as an excused absence when a valid excuse is provided by the parent or custodian.

In accordance with State Law, a parent or guardian must explain the cause of every absence of students under his/her control or charge. Every student, upon return to school, must bring a verifiable written excuse from home signed by the student's parent or guardian for each absence and present it to the principal or designee. The written excuse should be presented to the principal or designee on the day the student returns to school, but no later than two (2) days after his/her return or the absence(s) will be recorded as unexcused. The principal or designee shall ensure that the student's teacher(s) are notified whether the absence is excused or unexcused. All written excuses shall be retained for the remainder of the school year in the principal's office or other approved locations.

DE – Doctor/Nurse Excuse

Doctor, dental, or other medical excuses for the child.

RI -Religious Instruction

Observance of religious practice or holiday.

(A student will be excused for religious holidays when the student's parent or guardian comes in person to the school and signs a request for the student to be absent for this purpose. When this procedure is followed, the student's absences will be excused and shall not be counted toward the excessive absence clause of this policy. Students shall be allowed to make up work missed during such absences.)

X – Emergency School Closure

Inclement weather or other which would be dangerous to the life and health of the student as determined by the superintendent or designee.

LG - Legal

Required court appearance as ordered by a subpoena or other court documents.

Unexcused Absence

Forms of unexcused absences may include the following:

UA – Unexcused Absence

Absences for reasons other than those defined above shall be considered unexcused.

Any absence for which a valid written explanation is not provided within two (2) school days shall be coded as unexcused. Any absence beyond the seventh for any student shall be unexcused unless the written explanation meets an excused absence category. Any student having an unexcused absence will be considered truant as defined by the Alabama Administrative Code, Chapter 290-3-1-.02(7) (c).

Tardiness to School

Students, who consistently arrive late to school, may be referred to the local school Principal and, if necessary, District Attendance Staff to assist with a plan designed to ensure the student arrives on time, which may include a meeting with the parent, student, principal and attendance staff and use of the district's bus transportation system. A district social worker may conduct a home visit to assist families who are consistently tardy to school.

Instructional Expectations

To properly carry out its belief that attendance equates with academic achievement, the Board expects the following:

1. Principals and teachers will mutually plan and ensure that each student receives instruction each day, each period, and in every subject.

2. Every student in attendance in school will receive academic credit for each period and each class of every instructional day by one or more of the following methods as determined by the teacher:

    a. Completing and handing in homework or class work

    b. Taking a daily assessment, for which the student will receive a grade and/or feedback based on the result of the assessment

    c. Participating in-class discussion, class work, and/or other participation as determined by the teacher

Make-up of Work, Tests, and Other Assignments

Grades should reflect a student's academic performance. To the best of their ability, students are expected to complete all work, tests, and other assignments given by their teachers. Students are expected to attend school on a daily basis, but the Board recognizes there may be times when a student may be absent from school. The following options are available for teachers, students, and their parents to ensure education is uninterrupted due to an absence.

Excused Absences

Students are permitted to complete work, tests, and other assignments when absences are for excused reasons. Said student shall contact the teacher or teachers and complete all makeup work within 3 days of absence. Teachers shall not be required to reteach lessons, but students shall be given a reasonable opportunity to learn the lessons missed due to excused absences. Students may only receive academic credit on days on which absences are marked as excused.

In cases of extreme or extenuating circumstances based on the nature of the absence, the teacher(s) may grant additional days to complete and return assignments or take tests.

Unexcused Absences

Winston County Schools may provide make-up work or examinations for students absent for unexcused reasons; however, students may not receive full academic credit for late or missed assignments.

Absences Due to Out of School Suspension

Out-of-school suspensions are deemed unexcused absences and will directly impact a student's absences from school.

Checking Students Out of School

The parent/legal guardian will be allowed to check a student out of school unless the parent/legal guardian has specifically designated someone else to check the student out of school. School officials will keep accurate records as to whom, what time, and for what reason students are checked out of school.

Check-ins/check-outs shall be considered unexcused absences from class periods missed unless evidence is presented to the principal or designee by the parent or guardian that the check-in/check-out was for an excused reason. Students must check-in/check-out through the school office in compliance with the policy.

Away from School Due to School-Sponsored/Authorized Activities

Students who participate in school-sponsored or school-authorized activities and are thereby away from school or class will not be counted as absent from school for this purpose. Students are expected to make up work missed while at these activities and should be given the same opportunities as those afforded to students with excused absences. Absences due to these activities should be indicated with proper coding to indicate the absence was due to such activities. The school may require appropriate documentation to support any absence coded in this category. Failure to provide the requested documentation may result in an unexcused absence.

Student-Athlete Attendance

Students who are absent from school for an excused or unexcused reason shall not participate in any school extracurricular or co-curricular activities that day (athletic contests, cheerleading, scholars' bowl, etc.) except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the principal. Students must be in attendance in accordance with school policy and procedures.

Truancy

If a parent/legal guardian does not explain in writing within two (2) days of a student's return to school after being absent, that student will be classified as truant for each and every absence. The student will also be classified as truant if the Principal (or administrative designee) determines that an absence(s) is unexcused based on the parent/custodian's written explanation.

The Code of Alabama requires schools to notify parents of their student's unexcused absences to inform parents of Alabama's compulsory school attendance laws and be advised of the penalties that can be applied if the student continues to be truant from school. It is advised that schools notify parents after the student's first unexcused absence from school. Please understand that the Early Warning Notice is intended to correct any error and/or to remind parents of Alabama's Compulsory Education Law. Upon the accumulation of an unexcused absence, the student is considered truant from school, and consequently in violation of state law and the Board's attendance policy.

State law requires that parents ensure their child has good attendance in school and further states that failure to do so could lead to prosecution of the parents and/or child for failure to comply with the law. School officials are required to report to juvenile authorities those students and parents who are in violation of the law. It is at five unexcused absences that a student is considered seriously truant.

The following guidelines will be used and steps will be taken to handle truancy by students of Winston County:

1. BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR: Each student will have access to the student handbook outlining the Winston County Truancy Policy. If access is not available, a printed copy is available upon request. Parents/guardians are required to read the handbook, sign an acknowledgment statement, and return the statement to the student's school.

2. Upon the first (1st) unexcused absence, the county truancy officer will contact the parent/custodian via a letter sent home with the student to remind the parent/legal guardian of the attendance policies and procedures of Winston County Schools.

3. Upon the third (3rd) unexcused absence, the Helping Families Initiative (HFI) will contact the parent/custodian via text or email. The parent, custodian, or person having control of the child, shall do the following:

a) Update their child's attendance at the school, and

b) Work with HFI to reduce their child's absences

4. Upon the fifth (5th) unexcused absence, the parent, custodian, or person having control of the child, shall:

a) Receive a Notice of Violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law from the District Attendance Office and/or the Juvenile Probation Office notifying the parent that a complaint is being filed with the Juvenile Court System against the parent/custodian, under Code of Alabama (1975), 16-28-12(c) (failure to cooperate), for truancy against the child and must attend a scheduled meeting date with Juvenile Probation Office and School Attendance Officer.

5. Upon the seventh (7th) and following unexcused absences, the Attendance Officer and/or the Juvenile Probation Officer will send a Notice of Violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law from the Juvenile Probation Office notifying the parent that a complaint/petition is being filed with the Court against the parent/custodian, under Code of Alabama (1975), 16-28-12(c) (failure to cooperate), for truancy against the child.

Virtual School Attendance Requirements

Students attending Winston County Virtual School must meet the following attendance criteria:

1. Students must adhere to the Winston County Schools Attendance Policy

2. Students must attend class each day (as monitored by the virtual school staff) and keep up with course assignments/pace

3. Log in to courseware daily to document attendance

The school system reserves the right to set specific attendance requirements for each virtual course. The superintendent or his/her designee is authorized to develop alternate attendance policies for virtual courses, provided that students in such programs are given notice of the attendance requirements. A student's failure to comply with such requirements may result in administrative action.

Perfect Attendance Award

A Perfect Attendance Certificate shall be awarded to students who have attended school every day during the school year, i.e., no tardies, no check-outs, etc.

Nine-Week / Semester Exam

Winston County Schools will require a nine-week exam in each subject for the 1st and 3rd nine weeks in grades 7-12. All students will take the respective exam, **which will be 10% of the nine-week grade**, for their classes.

Furthermore, WCS will require comprehensive semester exams in each subject in grades 7-12 to be given at the end of each semester; however, students may exempt the exam should they meet the requirements as follows:

1. No unexcused absences.
2. No office discipline referrals.
3. Maintain the following average and no more than the number of excused absences for each:
    a. "A" average and 5 excused absences
    b. "B" average and 4 excused absences
    c. "C" average and 3 excused absences
    d. "D" average and 0 absences

The semester exam will be 20% of the semester average.

Advanced Placement classes, Dual Enrollment Courses, and ACCESS classes may not use the specified guidelines detailed above. AP, dual enrollment, and ACCESS grading expectations (as set by the College Board, each community college and/or university, ACCESS Learning, etc.) will supersede this requirement.

STUDENT CONDUCT

All students of the School District are charged with the responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to good citizenship everywhere. Student conduct shall be founded on the basic concept of respect and consideration for the rights of others.

All policies and rules and regulations in this manual shall be applicable to students while under the jurisdiction of the School District including all school facilities, buses, and rented/leased facilities to accommodate School District activities. Further, Board Policy and rules and regulations of the administration shall be applicable to students while attending activities/contests/games sponsored by the School District.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD'S CONDUCT

The Board hereby advises parents/guardians of their responsibility for the conduct of their child(ren) based on Legislative Act No. 93-672 that amends Section 16-28-12 of The Code of Alabama. **The Act has important implications for parents/guardians and students of the School District. Applicable sections of The Code of Alabama now read as follows:**

Section I—Title 16, The Code of Alabama, 1975, is amended to read as follows:

"(A) Each parent, guardian, or other person having control or custody of any child required to attend school or receive regular instruction by a private tutor who fails to have the child enrolled in school or who fails to send the child to school, or to have him or her instructed by a private tutor during the

time the child is required to attend a public school, private school, denominational school, or parochial school or be instructed by a private tutor, or fails to require the child to regularly attend the school or tutor, or fails to compel the child to properly conduct himself or herself as a pupil in accordance with a written policy on school behavior adopted by the local board of education and documented by the appropriate school official which conduct may result in the suspension of the pupil, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not more than one hundred dollars ($100) and may also be sentenced to hard labor for the county for not more than 90 days. The absence of a child without the consent of the principal teacher of the school he or she attends or should attend, or the tutor who instructs or should instruct the child, shall be prima facie evidence of the violation of this section.

***(B)** Any parent, guardian, or other person having control or custody of any child enrolled in public school who fails to require the child to regularly attend the school or tutor, or fails to compel to properly conduct himself or herself as a pupil in accordance with a written policy on school behavior adopted by the local board of education and documented by the appropriate school official which conduct may result in the suspension of the pupil, shall be reported by the principal to the Superintendent of Education of the School District in which the suspected violation occurred. The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall report such suspected violations to the district attorney within 10 days. Any principal or Superintendent of Education or his or her designee intentionally failing to report such a suspected violation shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. The district attorney shall vigorously enforce this section to ensure proper conduct and required attendance by any child enrolled in the public schools."

In an effort to implement and communicate the basic principles of the Act, the Board endorses the following operational procedures:

1. Parents/guardians and students shall be informed of the intent of Act 93-672 and Title 16-28-12 of The Code of Alabama through the printing of the basic principles in student handbooks and/or in school newsletters. Such information should be communicated at the beginning of each school year.

   The basic principles are as follows:

   a. Parents/guardians must enroll their children (i.e. all children between the ages of 7 and 16 shall be required to attend school).

   b. Parents/guardians are responsible for the regular attendance of their children.

   c. Parents/guardians are to compel their children to properly conduct himself/herself in accordance with the policies of the Board related to student behavior.

   d. Parents/guardians should be informed that inappropriate conduct or behavior on the part of their child(ren) may result in suspension from school and such suspensions will be reported to the Superintendent of Schools and District Attorney by school administrators.

   e. Parents/guardians will be subject to prosecution by the District Attorney's Office on the first or second suspension if, in the opinion of the principal, the offense committed by the child warrants such action.

2. School principals and/or the Superintendent of Schools are responsible for reporting violations of this Act to the District Attorney's Office. School principals and/or the Superintendent of Schools are hereby informed that the intentional failing to report a suspected violation of this Act could result in being declared guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. Such reports shall be made on the School District's Notification of Suspension Form filed JCDA-R.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY

In accordance with Legislative Act 94-819, parents are liable for damage to school property caused by their child(ren).

USE OF CARS ON CAMPUS

Any student who drives to school must show proof of a driver's license and liability insurance. They must also purchase a parking permit from the office. This parking permit MUST BE VISIBLE on the car at all times it is on campus. Students MAY NOT sit in their cars on campus and MAY NOT MOVE THEM WITHOUT PERMISSION. Students are to leave their car immediately and are not allowed to return to their car without permission from an administrator.

Permit placement: All vehicles must display the appropriate permit in the area determined by school administration. Failing to do so may result in disciplinary action or the removal of driving privileges.

Upon entering: When entering the parking area, students are to leave their cars and go directly onto the main campus. There is no loitering in the school parking lot.

Proper parking: All vehicles must be properly parked within the designated parking area at all times. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

Bus area: Driving in the bus area is not permitted. Students are not allowed to pass a bus that is stopped to load or unload students or a bus that has a stop sign out anywhere on campus. Re-admittance to the parking lot: Once students enter the building, they are not permitted back into the parking lot unless they obtain a pass from an administrator.

Unpermitted exiting: Students who use their cars to leave campus without prior permission and/or without signing out in the front office may have their parking privileges revoked and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Overnight Parking: Overnight parking in any of the school parking lots is not permitted unless prior approval is given by the school administration. Cars parked overnight may be towed at the owner's expense.

Search: Cars parked on the school campus are subject to search if there is reasonable suspicion of a weapon or illegal substance.

Lost Decal: Should the parking permit be lost; the student will be required to purchase another permit at the current price.

Return of Decals: At the end of the school year, decals must be returned (if applicable) to the office in good condition. It is the discretion of the office to determine "good" condition. If the permit is deemed to be unusable, the student will be charged a replacement fee.

Failure: Failure to comply with the rules and regulations will result in, but not limited to, fees, disciplinary action, and/or the loss of driving privileges.

WINSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DAMAGES THAT OCCUR ON CAMPUS

Students Leaving School Campus

A student is not permitted to leave the school campus during regular school hours except in accordance with the provisions that follow:

1. A student's parent or guardian may come to the school in person and check his/ her child out of school. A guardian or someone specifically designated by the student's parent/guardian may check a student out of school.

2. In emergency situations, the school principal or designee may permit a student to leave the school campus based upon a telephone request from the student's parent or guardian. In such instances, the principal or designee shall attempt to contact the student's parent by telephone to confirm the request.

Any student violating this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action by the local school principal.

NO-FIGHT POLICY

The Board is obligated to provide a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to teaching and learning; therefore, it is the policy of this school system that **fighting** in school buildings, on school grounds, at any school-sponsored event, or on a school-owned/maintained vehicle **will not be tolerated**. A fight is defined as any conduct falling within the Alabama statutes defining assault, menacing and reckless endangerment, or criminal coercion. **Refer to Title 13A of The Code of Alabama 1975.**

The Superintendent of Schools, working cooperatively with the local police, sheriff, the district attorney, and the juvenile court, shall enforce this **"no-fight" policy** at all middle/junior high schools and senior schools within the system.

The procedures outlined below shall be followed:

1. Fighting in a school building, on school grounds, at any school sponsored event, or on a school-owned/maintained vehicle shall be classified as a major violation of the code of student conduct.

2. The principal or designee shall investigate the fight and take the appropriate action as identified in the code of student conduct.

3. The principal or designee shall secure the cooperation of witnesses to the fight and secure written statements from all witnesses.

4. The principal or designee shall secure reliable witnesses for court appearances.

5. The principal or designee shall call the police and file a complaint/petition with the juvenile court.

6. A reasonable attempt shall be made to notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) if the student is to be removed from the school by police officers.

All students and parents/guardians of students within the system and system employees shall receive sufficient and ample notice of the passage of this policy. This policy shall be outlined in the code of student conduct and shall be communicated to all students on the first day of school and at intervals throughout the school year. In addition, this policy shall be discussed at meetings involving parents/guardians.

Classification of Offenses

CLASS 1 OFFENSE

1.01 Excessive distraction
1.02 Illegal organization
1.03 Intimidation of a student
1.04 Gambling
1.05 Tardiness
1.06 Profanity

1.07 Non-Conformity to dress code
1.08 Disruption on school bus (minor)
1.09 Inappropriate display of affection
1.10 Unauthorized absence from class
1.11 Providing false info to Bd. Emp.
1.12 Refusal to complete assignments
1.13 Vehicular violations
1.14 Any other violation which the principal deems reasonable to fall into this category

CLASS 2 OFFENSE
2.01 Defiance of authority
2.02 Possession or use of tobacco
2.03 Battery upon students
2.04 Fighting
2.05 Vandalism (less than $200)
2.06 Stealing
2.07 Possession of stolen property
2.08 Threats---Extortion
2.09 Trespassing
2.10 Possession of fireworks
2.11 Offensive touching or pinching
2.12 Written or verbal proposition
2.13 Use of obscene manifestations (verbal, written, physical)
2.14 Directing profanities toward employees
2.15 Leaving school without permission
2.16 Any other violation which the principal deems reasonable to fall into this category

CLASS 3 OFFENSE
3.01 Drugs and Alcohol
3.02 Arson
3.03 Battery upon a Board employee
3.04 Stealing – Larceny-Grand Theft
3.05 Burglary of School property
3.06 Criminal Mischief
3.07 Possession of a firearm
3.08 Discharging a firearm other device
3.09 Possession of weapons
3.10 Bomb Threat
3.11 Explosions
3.12 Sexual Acts
3.13 Aggravated battery
3.14 Inciting or participating in student disorder
3.15 Unjust activation of a fire-alarm system
3.16 Igniting fireworks
3.17 Distributing explicit images
3.18 Any other violation which the principal deems reasonable to fall into this category

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERMEDIATE OFFENSES - CLASS II and CLASS III (further explanation)

2.01 Defiance of Board employee's authority
Any verbal or non-verbal refusal to comply with lawful and reasonable direction or order of a Board employee
3.12 Sexual acts
Acts of sexual nature including, but not limited to, battery, intercourse, attempted rape, or rape
3.13 Aggravated battery

Intentionally causing great bodily harm, disability, or permanent disfigurement; use of a deadly weapon

3.14 Inciting or participating in major student disorder

Leading, encouraging, or assisting in major disruptions that result in destruction or damage of private or public property; personal injury to participants or others.

3.15 Unjustified activation of a fire alarm system

3.16 Igniting fireworks and/or firecrackers

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES - CLASS 1

Administrative responses for Class I violations include but are not limited to the following:

- student conference
- parent contact(s) conference(s)
- after-school detention
- suspension from school (out-of-school suspension not to exceed three (3) days per incident)
- suspension from school bus
- corporal punishment
- assignment to in-school suspension

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES - CLASS II

Administrative responses for Class II violations include but are not limited to the following:

- parent contact(s)/conference(s)
- corporal punishment
- suspension from school (out-of-school suspension not to exceed three (3) days per incident)
- assignment to Winston County Alternative School

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES – CLASS III

Administrative responses for Class III violations include but are not limited to the following:

- suspension from school (out-of-school suspension not to exceed three (3) days per incident)
- assignment to Winston County Alternative School
- expulsion
- legal action

The following procedures shall be followed for out-of-school suspensions:
Out of school suspension will be an unexcused absence (truancy).

FIRST SUSPENSION:

- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be notified in writing of the suspension.
- The Superintendent of Education shall be notified of the suspension.
- The District Attorney shall be notified of the suspension.
- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be warned of possible court action.
- Charges may be filed against the parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child.

SECOND SUSPENSION:

- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be notified in writing of the suspension.
- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall attend a school conference.
- The Superintendent of Education shall be notified of the suspension.
- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be warned of possible court action.
- Charges may be filed against the parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child.

THIRD SUSPENSION:

- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be notified in writing of the suspension.
- The child and the parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall attend the School Conduct Intervention Program provided by the Juvenile Court. This program is designed to assist parents by informing them of the provisions of the law and identifying resources.
- The Superintendent of Education shall be notified of the suspension.
- Charges may be filed against the parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child.

FOURTH SUSPENSION:

- The parent, guardian, or person having control or custody of the child shall be notified in writing of the suspension.
- The Superintendent of Education shall be notified of the suspension.
- The District Attorney shall be notified of the suspension and provided information relative to this and previous suspensions.
- If warranted, charges will be filed.

Generally, the fourth suspension shall result in charges being brought against the parent, guardian, or other person having control or custody of the child. Special situations may result in legal proceedings being instituted prior to the fourth suspension.

Alternative School

The Winston County Alternative School Program is a single, centrally located facility, which reports directly to the Superintendent. Monitoring, observation, and evaluation of program goals and objectives are under the direction of the Alternative School Administrator.

The Winston County Alternative School is a highly structured program designed to provide a cohesive learning environment in which students may develop skills necessary for school success. The program seeks to develop academic success, positive attitudes, and appropriate behaviors. Objectives for the student include improving academics, attendance, behavior, and life skills. Increasing knowledge of consequences of behavior, developing respect for authority, developing skills for conflict resolution, improving self-confidence and self-control, and developing the ability to accept responsibility are additional objectives for student growth.

The Winston County Alternative School will work closely with all local school administrators, teachers, and counselors in order to establish a high level of academic success. Winston County Alternative School will also work with community stakeholders to ensure a relevant, safe and orderly learning environment.

It is the desire of the Winston County Alternative School to provide instruction and assistance to all students. Quality instruction, positive and caring attitudes, and well-managed classrooms are provided for the success of each student. A student may be placed in the alternative school for disciplinary reasons as well as an alternative setting as recommended by the local school.

DRESS CODE FOR STUDENTS

Students are required to appear at school clothed and groomed in a manner that will help provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and that will promote proper behavior. Any article of clothing or manner of style determined by teachers to be disruptive to the learning environment or to be hazardous to the health and safety of students or employees will not be worn.

The following dress code requirements are applicable to grades 5-12:

1. Halters, tank tops, see-through blouses and shirts, undergarments worn as outer garments, or any other clothing that is determined to be too revealing, suggestive, or disruptive shall not be worn to school.

2. Shirts, blouses, and dresses must be buttoned or high enough to cover the chest, and the back of the body should not be exposed.

3. Shorts, skirts, and dresses should be approximately fingertip length when standing.

4. Shirts and blouses must meet pants and skirt bands so that no midriff shows while seated or standing.

5. Clothing with slogans or pictures that promote activities or products prohibited by the school code of conduct should not be worn.

6. Clothing imprinted with slogans, graphics or pictures that refer to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or clothing with vulgar or suggestive writings, pictures or patches shall not be worn to school.

7. Students must wear shoes or sandals at all times. House shoes, house slippers, or wheeled shoes are prohibited.

8. Students shall not wear sunglasses inside the buildings unless prescribed by a medical doctor for health reasons.

9. Students shall not wear any type of cap or hat during school hours. Exceptions will be made for designated special occasions, athletic events, or head protection during career technical or agri-science classes.

10. Clothing with holes that are above the fingertip rule and that show skin is not to be worn at school.

11. All students' hair should be neat, clean, and well-groomed. The administration reserves the right to request students to alter their hair length and/or style if, in their opinion, it is disrupting the school environment or an endangerment to the health and safety of that student, other students, or employees.

12. When wearing leggings, yoga pants, or any similar fitting pants, the shirt must be fingertip length when standing.

13. Piercings for male and female students are only allowed in the ears. All other piercings may not be worn or must have a 'nude or clear' spacer.

14. Pajama pants may not be worn as outerwear and will only be allowed for designated special occasions.

15. Tattoos with slogans, graphics, or pictures that refer to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or with vulgar or suggestive writings and pictures, or with slogans or pictures that promote activities or products prohibited by the school code of conduct shall not be allowed. School administrators may request that you cover these tattoos with a dressing or Band-Aid, long sleeves, or long pants.

16. Blankets may not be used as a jacket or outer garment and worn during the school day.

Grades K-4

The aforementioned dress code is applicable to all students in grades K-4. The administrator has the authority to use their discretion in the enforcement of guidelines based on the age of the student.

** Any student deemed in violation of the dress code will be required to find clothing that meets the code or will be sent home (suspended) to correct the situation.

Electronic Communication Devices

In accordance with the FOCUS Act (HB166), the Winston County School System prohibits the use of all electronic communication devices, unless it follows guidelines as outlined in board policy. This includes but is not limited to using cellular telephones and/or other devices (i.e. "smart" watches) to make voice calls, to take photos, and/or to send/receive text messages. Students shall be allowed to possess such electronic devices; however, such devices are not to be used during the school day and must be stored in their vehicle, locker, or off their person.

Students in violation of this policy will be disciplined under the Student Code of Conduct. Administrative responses for violations include but are not limited to the following:

1st Offense:

1. Student conference with the principal
2. Device kept with the principal or in office
3. Student will have device returned at the end of the school day

2nd Offense:

1. Parent conference with the principal
2. Device kept with principal or in office
3. Parent or approved individual pick up of device required

3rd Offense:

1. Parent conference
2. Device kept with principal or in office
3. Choice of corporal punishment or 3 days alternative school
4. Parent or guardian pick up of device required

4th Offense:

1. Alternative school for 5 days
2. Parent or guardian pick up of device required

5th Offense:

1. Alternative school for 10 days
2. Parent or guardian pick up device required

Subsequent offenses will result in a conference with the principal and superintendent.

Any action using an electronic communication device that is deemed inappropriate behavior by the school administration will be subject to consistent, appropriate, and suitable administrative responses.

The Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to any personal/electronic device.

The possession of an electronic device is strictly prohibited during the administration of a secure test. If a student is observed in possession of an electronic device during the administration of a secure test, the device will be confiscated. If a student is observed using an electronic device during the administration of a secure test, testing for the student will cease, the device will be confiscated and is subject to search, the student will be dismissed from testing, and the student's test will be invalidated. (See ALSDE Digital Device Student Assessment Policy for further information)

Tobacco, Nicotine, Vapes, and Related Items

The use of Tobacco, Nicotine, Vapes, and Related Items is strictly prohibited. Consequences of illegal possession, distribution, and/or sales of such products on school property will be administered pursuant to School Board procedures:

District Response to Violation of Policy

1st Offense:
(Possession) 1 day of OSS or corporal punishment with completion of the State-recommended vape education program before returning to normal schedule (grades 8-12 will do the vape education program)
(Distribution) 4 weeks of Alternative School and court referral
*Peer Helpers modules can be used for grades 5-7.
*Students in grades K-4 will be disciplined at the discretion of the principal.
SRO Conference/Warning
Parent notified

2nd Offense:
(Possession) Choice of corporal punishment or 3 days alternative school
(Distribution) 9 weeks of alternative school and court referral
SRO issues a ticket
Parent Notified

3rd Offense:
(Possession) Alternative school for a maximum of 20 days
(Distribution) 18 weeks of alternative school and court referral
SRO issues a ticket
Parent Notified

4th Offense:
(Possession) Alternative School for 9 weeks
(Distribution) The student will withdraw from school and enroll in homeschool
SRO issues a ticket
Parent Notified

Any additional offense: *Will be addressed on an individual basis at the discretion of the Superintendent. This will require a parent meeting in the Central Office or other designated location that will include student, parent, principal, Supt.*

ALL ILLEGAL substances such as CBD, THC, or any other derivatives deemed "illegal" by state law will be handed over to local law enforcement.

PROCEDURE FOR EARLY ARRIVAL AND LATE DEPARTURE OF CHILDREN:

NO STUDENT should be allowed to enter the school building, and or facilities, prior to **7:30** am on scheduled school days. Students who arrive prior to **7:30** am will remain on the bus or in their car until this time.

Due to the necessity of having to supervise students closely and the fact that teachers and other school personnel have many responsibilities before and after the regular school day, parents/guardians must assume the responsibility for bringing their children to school at the designated time and picking up their children promptly after the school day ends.

In situations where parents/guardians do not abide by the school arrival and departure schedule or fail to bring and pick up their children within the specified time frame appropriate actions will be taken.

TRANSPORTATION

Students riding buses are under school jurisdiction from the time they get on the bus in the morning until they get off the bus in the afternoon. We expect students to comply with the rules and regulations governing public carriers and to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion. The principal may exclude a pupil from the bus for disciplinary reasons, and his/her parents shall provide transportation to and from school during the period of such exclusion. Students are subject to disciplinary measures at designated bus stops.

In addition to the applicability of the School District's Student Code of Conduct and local school rules and regulations on student conduct, the following regulations shall apply to all students riding School District-owned buses/vehicles:

1. Students are subject to the driver's authority while riding the bus.

2. Students shall not ride school buses on trips other than regular routes without written permission and authorization by parent(s) or guardian(s).

3. Students shall be required to get on and off buses at stops approved for them and at no other stops without the written approval of the principal or designee.

4. Students should observe classroom conduct (except for ordinary conversation) at all times when getting on, off, or riding the bus and shall be subject to all school rules and regulations.

Student Responsibilities

Students should adhere to the following rules when boarding and riding school buses:

1. Be on time at the designated pickup sites. (SDE recommends 5 min before)

2. Stay off public roads while waiting for the bus.

3. Wait for the bus to stop before attempting to board.

4. Keep all body parts inside the bus at all times.

5. Assist in keeping the bus safe and clean.

6. Refrain from loud talking or behavior that may divert the driver's attention. Profane, indecent, or abusive language will not be permitted.

7. Refrain from damaging the bus (pay for any damage to seats, windows, etc.).

8. Do not bring bottles, cans, food, balloons, etc. onto the bus.

9. Do not leave books, lunches, etc. on buses.

10. Keep aisles of the bus unobstructed at all times.

11. Help with the comfort and safety of smaller students.

12. Do not throw anything out of bus windows.

13. Remain in your seat while the bus is in motion.

14. Remain quiet when the bus is approaching a railroad crossing stop.

15. In case of an emergency, remain in the bus or follow the driver's instructions.

Driver Responsibilities

All drivers are to report discipline problems to the principal (or his/her designee) of the school where the student is enrolled. The procedure for handling discipline problems is as follows:

1. The driver should warn students about their discipline and how it relates to school bus safety. This should not be done in front of other students.

2. If the student's behavior continues to be disruptive, bus drivers should contact the student's parent.

3. If the problem persists, the bus drivers should turn in the student to the principal or his/her designee and complete a "School Bus Disciplinary Report."

4. Stopping or pulling the bus off the road while on a regular route should only be done when all other alternatives fail.

5. Never take a bus back to school for discipline problems unless it is an extreme emergency and safety on the bus is jeopardized.

The Charles (Chuck) Poland, Jr. Alabama Act 2013-347 – Trespass on a School Bus makes it a Class "A" misdemeanor to trespass on a school bus. Such offences include a punishment of up to a year in jail.

MEALS

Students eat free through the Community Eligibility Provision. Participation in this program allows all students to receive one free breakfast and one free lunch each school day. These meals are provided to all students regardless of economic status. Winston County Schools are thankful for the opportunity to continue this program for another year and hope that student participation in the program will continue to increase. Participation in the program will directly impact our ability to continue the program in future school years.

Visitors to campus are welcome to eat in our school cafeteria. Prices for visitors are as follows:

	Breakfast	Lunch
Visitor (Child or Adult)	$3.25	$5.00
Special Event	$4.00	$6.50

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

Parents, please be advised that the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) for Winston County Schools is on file in the principal's office, assistant principal's office, and Central Office. If you wish to review this plan and make comments, please contact your local administrator.

Response to Instruction (RtI) Plan

Response to Instruction or RtI is implemented in all schools. The State Department of Education defines RtI as an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' needs. The purpose of RtI is to improve educational outcomes for ALL students.

Special Education Services

The Winston County School System serves students ages 3-21 years old with disabilities under IDEA. To initiate a referral for a student with a suspected disability, please contact the principal at the local school. Additionally, the Winston County School System offers accommodations for eligible students with disabilities under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For more information regarding Section 504, please contact the local school counselor.

Child Find

Child Find is a statewide effort by the State Department of Education and the Department of Rehabilitation Services to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities from birth to 21. The Child Find project is an attempt to locate all children with disabilities in Winston County from birth through twenty-one years of age. If you are aware of a child in Winston County with a disability or a suspected disability, please contact Lauren Archer with the Winston County Board of Education at 205-489-5018 or larcher@wcsclass.com concerning available services. The Winston County Board of Education serves children ages 3-21. Services are available through Early Intervention for children ages birth-3. Early Intervention may be contacted at 1-800-543-3098.

Mental Health/Opt-In Option

No student under the age of fourteen may participate in ongoing school counseling services including, but not limited to, mental health services, unless (1) the student's parent or legal guardian has submitted a written opt-in granting permission for the student to participate or (2) there is an imminent threat to the health of the student or others.

For purposes of this policy, "mental health services" includes services, treatment, surveys, or assessments relating to mental health; however, it does not include instructional activities designed to educate students regarding topics related to mental health (1) contained in the school system's approved curriculum or (2) otherwise required to be taught by law (e.g., Erin's Law; Jason Flatt Act).

This policy is not applicable to any school counseling services or "mental health services" contained in a student's PST, IEP, or §504 plan. Consent for those services will be obtained in accordance with the specific procedures required by federal and/or state law, and information regarding any mental health services will be provided in the pertinent plan.

Jamari Williams

It is required by Act #2018-472 that the bullying complaint form located on the winstonk12.org website under Parents and Families be submitted by the affected student, or the parent or guardian of the affected student, and not by an education employee on behalf of an affected student or his or her parent or guardian.

The affected student, or the parent or guardian of the affected student, must submit this form to the school's principal or his/her designee in person or by United States postal mail. The principal/designee is responsible for the investigation. Incomplete forms will not be considered for investigation.

Anonymous reports will not be the basis for imposing disciplinary action against a student. Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of intimidation, violence, threat of violence, or bullying, is prohibited and appropriate remedial action will be taken against a person who engages in such reprisal or retaliation.

Gifted Program

Teachers, counselors, administrators, parents or guardians, peers, self, or any other individuals with knowledge of the student's abilities may refer a student for gifted evaluation. Additionally, all second-grade students will be observed as potential gifted referrals using a gifted behavior checklist. For each student referred, information is gathered in the areas of aptitude, characteristics, and performance. The information is entered on a matrix where points are assigned according to established criteria. The total number of points earned determines if the student qualifies for gifted services.

To make a referral, contact the gifted teacher at your child's school.

Winston County Schools Promotion and Retention Procedures

As part of this process, Winston County Schools implements the Response to Instruction (RtI) framework to provide targeted support for students who are not meeting grade-level standards. Through RtI, students receive evidence-based interventions, regular progress monitoring, and collaborative problem-solving designed to address individual learning needs. Data gathered through the RtI process is reviewed and considered in promotion and retention decisions.

Promotion decisions are based on a student's overall academic performance, including classroom grades, attendance, benchmark assessments, standardized test scores, and mastery of grade-level standards. Students

are expected to demonstrate adequate progress in reading, mathematics, and other core subjects to be promoted to the next grade level.

All promotion and retention decisions are made with careful consideration of the student's academic needs. **The Promotion Committee, which includes the student's teacher(s), principal, and other appropriate school staff, will review all relevant data and make the final decision regarding promotion or retention**. Parents/guardians will be notified of any concerns regarding possible retention as early as possible in the school year and will be involved in the intervention process.

Our goal is to ensure that every student is prepared for future success by receiving the support and instruction they need at the appropriate level.

Valedictorian/Salutatorian Requirements

The Valedictorian and Salutatorian for the graduating class of each high school must qualify for the most advanced academic diploma offered. The student with the highest numerical unweighted grade average will be the class Valedictorian. The student with the second highest numerical unweighted grade average shall be the class Salutatorian.

Grades earned in credit bearing classes from the first term 8th grade through the 1st semester of 12th grade in core classes will be used in calculations. The grade point average (GPA) is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit attempted. The candidates must have been enrolled at the local high school for 3 semesters and complete course work at the school site.

To be eligible for the honors endorsement, the student must earn credits from the highest-level classes offered on campus.

Graduates with Distinction--A student that is seeking an Alabama High School Diploma may graduate with distinction if the student has an unweighted grade point average of 93 to 100. Based on the unweighted numeric GPA for earned credit core courses taken will be calculated at the end of the first semester of the senior year for the following recognition:

Summa Cum Laude--With Highest Honor 99-100

Magna Cum Laude--With High Honor 96-98.999

Cum Laude--With Honor 93-95.99

This policy will be applicable to the 2020-2021 sophomore cohort and all cohorts that follow. Winston County Schools will continue to review and consider policy changes as the ALSDE updates graduation options and diploma pathways.

Graduation Requirements

Students must earn 24 credits to be eligible for graduation, as well as take a required civics exam, complete the FAFSA (or complete the opt-out form), earn a college and career readiness (CCR) indicator (2026 graduates), and pass a financial literacy exam (2028 graduates). However, we are excited to inform you about a new opportunity available through Alabama's Option B Workforce Pathway to the Alabama High School Diploma. This program allows students more flexibility in earning their high school diploma while emphasizing career development.

Students will be awarded the same high school diploma, regardless of which option they follow; **however, students enrolled in Option B shall only be required to complete two math credits and two science**

credits instead of the four math and four science credits required of other students. Option B students will be required to take geometry and Algebra I (or their equivalents/substitutes) and biology and a physical science (or their equivalents/substitutes).

In lieu of the two math and two science credits, students enrolled in Option B **must** earn a **minimum of three credits of career and technical education courses that are part of an approved CTE program of study**, which help prepare students to go directly into employment in their chosen career field following graduation.

Students will still earn 24 credits for graduation. The four credits that would have been math or science courses will be elective courses in career/technical education, foreign language, arts education, dual enrollment, or other courses to be determined based on student need.

****NOTE: Honors students will take honors courses via the traditional pathway.****

If you are interested in exploring Option B, please contact your child's principal or counselor to discuss requirements and complete a Letter of Agreement to officially opt in.

Health Related Services

Medication (both prescription and non-prescription) may be given only upon written request/permission by parent/legal guardian. A Parent Permission Form for Administration of Medications at School for each medication must be obtained from the school nurse and completed by a parent/legal guardian in the presence of the school nurse before medication will be administered.

The medication (both prescription and non-prescription) must be brought to the school nurse by parent/legal guardian. Prescription medications must be brought in the pharmacy labeled container with student's name, physician's name, current prescription date, name of prescription/name of medication, dosage, strength, time interval, route of administration, and the date of drug's expiration when appropriate.

All medications will be kept in the Health Room and be administered by the school nurse unless doctor's orders specify otherwise. In such cases, each situation will be assessed and arrangements made according to the physician's orders and school procedure.

Technology

All students / parents or guardians must agree and sign a STUDENT TECHNOLOGY USE AGREEMENT COMPLIANCE FORM prior to a student being able to use a computer or comparable device owned by the Winston County Board of Education. Students who are issued an electronic device which is found to be in violation of the rule (i.e. inappropriate material, reboot, etc.) will be taken from the student and considered a disciplinary matter.

In addition to the STUDENT TECHNOLOGY USE AGREEMENT COMPLIANCE FORM, students and parents must also sign a STUDENT ELECTRONIC DEVICE ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT FORM in order to receive a school issued electronic device. Further information regarding the use and care of these devices is available within the STUDENT/PARENT DEVICE ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY located on the District website.

LOCKERS

Lockers are issued to students at the beginning of the year. Students are not to exchange lockers unless permission is given through the office. Your locker should be kept locked at all times and should not be shared. Each student is responsible for keeping his/ her assigned locker clean both inside and outside. Painting the inside of a locker is prohibited. Damages caused by misuse of tape, etc., will be charged to the student responsible. Any locker malfunction should be reported to the proper advisor or the office.

Legal inspection of lockers is permitted by Board employees. Any contraband found in a locker will be considered to be in the possession of the student to whom the locker is assigned.

TEXTBOOKS

All basic texts are issued to students for their use during the school year. Workbooks and other supplies are paid for by the student. Textbooks are to be kept clean and handled carefully.

Please be sure your name, grade, and school are written on the book label in case the book is misplaced. You will be required to pay for lost or damaged books. Students should examine their books for damages when they receive them.

Fire/Tornado/Lockdown Drills

Fire and tornado drills are held at irregular intervals throughout the school year. Remember these basic rules:

1. Check the instructions in each classroom (they are posted) indicating how to leave the building in case of fire.

2. Walk! No talking! Move quickly and quietly to designated areas.

3. **FIRE** - ANNOUNCED **TORNADO** - ANNOUNCED

Lockdown drills are held within the first six weeks of each semester.

Student Athletic Eligibility

The Winston County School System strictly abides by the guidelines set forth by the AHSAA. Questions relating to eligibility may be answered by your local administrator.

Student Drug Testing Program

All students may be subject to random drug testing. Further information regarding the student drug testing policy is located on the District website.

** Actions Taken in Response to Positive Results
1st Positive Result – The extra-curricular student will be suspended from participation in interscholastic/ extracurricular athletics for 10 consecutive school days to include a minimum of two events.

2nd Positive Result – The extra-curricular student will be suspended from participation in interscholastic/ extracurricular activities for 20 consecutive school days to include a minimum of four events.

3rd Positive Result – The extra-curricular student will be suspended from participation in interscholastic/ extracurricular events for one calendar year.

ASBESTOS UPDATE

This is a yearly update on the asbestos management program in the Winston County Schools. In April of 1988, a thorough study of all school buildings was conducted by a certified asbestos inspecting company, ATEC, to identify any asbestos containing materials in our schools. A re-inspection is conducted every three years by a professional engineering company. The latest re-inspection was completed by ERG Environmental, Inc.

The management plan is available in the Principal's office and describes the steps taken to prevent asbestos fibers from being released.

The fact that these materials have been identified is no cause for alarm. These materials, such as floor tile, are perfectly safe as long as they are maintained. Most, if not all, floor tile has been removed or encapsulated. Any materials that could release fibers in normal everyday use have been removed.

If you need further information concerning asbestos in your school, you may contact the school principal or the Winston County Board of Education at 205-489-5018.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the official policy of the Winston County School System that no person in the system shall, on the grounds of race, color, disability, sex, religion, creed, national origin, or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or employment.

vised 8/4/22

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This handbook is designed to make you aware of policies and procedures under which our school system operates. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with its contents so that together we can meet the educational needs of your child.

By signing below, you acknowledge you have read and are willing to abide by the policies and procedures set forth by the Winston County Board of Education as outlined in this student handbook and School Board Policy. Failure to return this acknowledgement upon your student's next school day indicates your consent and agreement therein.

_____ _____

Parent or Guardian (Print) Date

_____

Parent or Guardian (Signature)

_____ _____

Student's Name (Print) Date

_____

Student Name (Signature)

By signing below, I provide consent to include my child's name in public documents such as Honor Roll, Athletic Programs, or recognition of achievements.

_____ _____

Parent or Guardian (Print) Date

_____

Parent or Guardian (Signature)

_____ _____

Student's Name (Print) Date

_____

Student Name (Signature)

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE ON THE NEXT SCHOOL DAY