Edition 8, Fall 2026

Safety Bulletin



IMPORTANT: CHECK BIKES BEFORE RIDING

We want to make you aware of a concerning safety issue that has been reported in the community. There have been reports of someone loosening the front-wheel quick-release lever or axle hardware on parked bicycles. If a rider gets on a bike without noticing that the front wheel is unsecured, the wheel could shift or detach, creating a serious risk of a fall and injury.

The police have been notified. We ask students and families to take a few moments to check bicycles before riding:

- Make sure the front and rear wheels are firmly attached and do not wobble.
- Check that any quick-release lever is fully closed and secure.
- If your bike has axle nuts, make sure they are tight.
- Check brakes, handlebars, and tires before riding.
- If anything looks loose, damaged, or unusual, do not ride the bike; ask an adult for help.

Tampering with someone else's bicycle is not a harmless prank. It can cause significant injuries and will be taken seriously. Please remind your child not to touch, move, or interfere with another person's bike for any reason.

We appreciate your partnership in helping students travel safely to and from school.

NEW Process Required for Volunteers in Our Schools

Volunteers play an essential role in supporting our students, staff, and schools. It is important that we take every reasonable step to ensure that visitors to our campuses and anyone engaging with our students (this includes field trips) are safe to do so. The Winnetka Public Schools is using Raptor VolunteerSafe to manage volunteer applications, approvals, and background screening requirements across the District in order to ensure safe engagement of volunteers on our campuses and with our students. All those interested in volunteering for the schools in some capacity must engage with VolunteerSafe before they are approved to volunteer.

This new system will help us streamline the volunteer process, continue to follow The District's **Volunteer and Chaperone Guidelines** and maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone on our campuses.

- Receive approval notifications electronically
- Complete required background screening requirements
- Manage volunteer information in one secure location
- Be approved for the school year to volunteer to support school events, field trips, or other volunteer opportunities

All volunteers, regardless of when you plan to volunteer in the district, will need to complete the volunteer application process and pay a $6.30 processing fee (paid during the registration). If you have an interest in volunteering, please complete the **VolunteerSafe form** at your earliest convenience.



Campus Safety & Security

In our continued commitment to ensure that our campuses are safe for students and staff to learn and work we are making some adjustments to our daily operations to improve security:

- Outdoor play at all five campuses will be restricted to fenced or otherwise protected areas at the rear of our buildings.
- Decorative safety bollards will be installed in phases to increase traffic safety during arrival and dismissal. Bollards are sturdy, reinforced posts designed to help prevent unauthorized vehicles from entering pedestrian areas while allowing students, staff, and visitors to move safely throughout campus. The bollards selected for our schools have been chosen to complement each building's architecture and historic character, blending seamlessly into the landscape while providing an important security enhancement.
- Supervising staff will be easily identifiable in reflective vests while outdoors with students at any time.
- Food delivery services like DoorDash and UberEats will no longer be permitted to enter our buildings, reducing the number of unidentified visitors to our campuses as well as the time it takes away from our office staff. Parents may drop off of forgotten lunches up until 10:30 a.m. on school days.

We know these changes create periods of adjustment for everyone; however, we have an obligation to prioritize safety over convenience and ensure our campuses are as secure as they can be for our students, staff and visitors. We appreciate your partnership in adjusting to these changes.

Personal and Instructional Technology

Beginning in the Fall of 2024, **The School Board approved the introduction of Yondr Pouches** in grades 5-8, eliminating the use of personal technology on our middle school campuses. Personal technology includes items such as cell/smart phones, airpods/earbuds, smartwatches, etc. While our K-4 schools do not utilize Yondr Pouches, access to personal technology is not allowed on any of our school sites during school hours and will be enforced. Students are not to engage with personal technology during instructional hours and will be subject to disciplinary consequences for using personal technology, including but not limited to parents reclaiming devices in the main office, and/or loss of privileges. Parents may call the main office of their child's school to relay any messages during the school day.

When it comes to instructional technology, these are tech devices that are issued by the District for student use. While we have an educational obligation to ensure our students are appropriately exposed to technology to equip them with the skills and discernment to be responsible users, we are also a school district rooted in a deep history of progressive education, which places a high value on experiential and meaningful learning through hands-on, imaginative, social and highly engaging learning experiences. We are committed to ensuring that these two educational responsibilities (technology and progressive education) co-exist in our classrooms. As a result, we are seeking staff and family feedback on the use of instructional technology. We will use this information to help us shape clearer guidelines and communication for staff and families on the use of instructional technology in the classroom. **Please complete this survey by October 2, 2026.**

Scan QR Code to take Survey.

Halloween Safety Tips:

COSTUME & PUMPKIN SAFETY

- Flame Resistance: Ensure all costumes, wigs, and accessories are labeled as "flame resistant".
- Visibility: Add reflective tape or striping to costumes and treat bags.
- Safe Alternatives: Use hypoallergenic, non-toxic makeup instead of masks that can obstruct your child's vision. If using accessories like swords or canes, ensure they are soft and flexible.
- Pumpkin Decorating: Allow children to decorate pumpkins with markers or stickers. Leave actual carving to adults and use battery-operated lights instead of open flame candles.

TRICK-OR-TREATING STREET SMARTS

- Pedestrian Rules: Only cross streets at corners or designated crosswalks. Avoid cutting across yards or darting out from between parked cars.
- Eye Contact: Teach children to make direct eye contact with drivers before stepping into a crosswalk.
- Stranger Awareness: Remind kids to only visit homes with porch lights on and never to enter a stranger's home or car.



TREATS & HOME SAFETY

- Candy Inspection: Wait until you return home to thoroughly inspect all treats. Discard any unwrapped items, punctured packaging, or suspicious-looking candy.
- Pathways: Clear your porch and walkway of tripping hazards like garden hoses, toys, or wet leaves before guests arrive.
- Pets: Restrain or secure family pets away from the door so they do not jump on or bite trick-or-treaters.

DRIVING SAFETY

- Slow down and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods. Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.
- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs.
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.
- Get rid of any distractions - like your phone - in your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.
- Turn your headlights on earlier in the day to spot children from greater distances.
- Popular trick-or-treating hours are 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Be especially alert for kids during those hours.



Getting to Know Winnie

In Fall 2025, The Winnetka Public Schools introduced a Therapy Dog Program designed to enhance student well-being and foster connection across our schools. Winnie accompanies Mr. Ray Finnerty, Director of Safety & Security to provide intermittent school-based opportunities that support emotional regulation, comfort, and engagement for both students and staff. Since her introduction, Winnie has made over 300 visits to schools (and counting). Winnie is looking forward to continuing to bond with our students, staff and families during the 2026/2027 school year.



Safety Reminder from the Village of Winnetka

The Village of Winnetka regulates the use of e-bikes, e-scooters, e-dirt bikes, and other motor-driven vehicles with the goal of sidewalk and roadway safety for all residents. These regulations apply to all village-owned or village-maintained property. Violations may result in a fine of $100 for both the operator and the parent/legal guardian (if applicable).

PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Any person operating a device on a public road or public sidewalk must follow the rules of the road, including traveling below the posted speed limit.
- It is illegal to operate a vehicle with more passengers than the number it is designed/equipped for.
- It is illegal to modify a device from its original design to change its speed, method of propulsion or braking, or to remove pedals, chains, or add a throttle.
- All individuals riding e-bikes must wear a helmet at all times.
- The person operating the device must be able to keep both hands on the handlebars/steering device at all times.

If you have questions about the classification of a device, please call the Winnetka Police Department at 847-501-6034.

Winnetka E-Bike, E-Scooter, E-Dirt Bike and Other Motor-Driven Vehicle Regulations

Device	Minimum Age	Driver's License Required	Public Sidewalks	Public Roadways*	Green Bay Trail	Private Property
Pedal Bicycles	None	✗	✓ †	✓	✓	✓
E-Bikes Class 1 & 2	16‡	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
E-Bikes Class 3	16	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
E-Scooters	18	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
E-Dirt Bikes	16	✓	✗	✗ §	✗	✓
Personal Mobility Devices	None	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Toy Vehicles	None	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Out-of-Class Electric Vehicles / Other Motor-Driven Vehicles	16	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓

* Any device operated on a public roadway or public sidewalks must comply with all the rules of the road.
† All bicycles must be walked on the sidewalks in the Village business districts.
‡ Class 1 & 2 electric bicycles may be operated by a person under the age of 16 if they are accompanied by a responsible adult.
§ E-dirt bikes must be properly registered and titled to be operated on a public roadway.

Pick Up/Drop Off Protocol

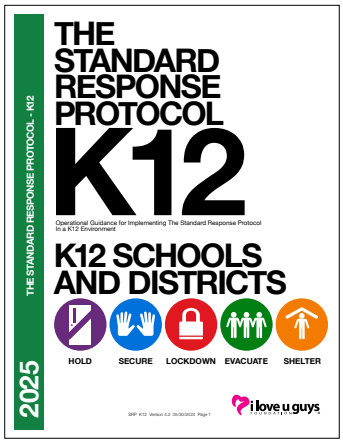
- When dropping your children off, please make sure you pull up to the curb and the child exits curbside
- Do not double park to let your children out of the car, this is not only illegal but dangerous
- Always be aware of your surroundings and mindful of children who are walking or biking to school
- The Winnetka Police strictly enforce school zone speed limits and cell phone use while driving
- Our crossing guards have a very important job; please respect them by listening to their instructions at all times
- Remind your children to use the crosswalks when crossing the street and to walk–not run–when crossing
- This protocol will also be strictly enforced during this Adventures in Learning (held at Washburne and Crow Island School in June and July).



Bike & Traffic Safety

In order to prevent traffic-related incidents from occurring in our community, it is important to be vigilant as a rider, pedestrian, or driver when traveling through town. Our school principals review bike and pedestrian safety practices with students at the start of the school year and again in the spring when bike riding increases. We ask that you also take a moment to re-review the following information with your family:

- Illinois law prohibits the use of cell phones or other electronic devices while in a school zone, even if it's hands free. It is dangerous and is enforced as a moving violation by the police.
  - Please do not use pick up and drop off time to check texts, etc. This potentially endangers others.
  - Please remind your students that they should not be using cell phones or other electronic devices while biking.
- Crossing guards are present at busier intersections near our schools to assist with safety. Please respect the authority of the crossing guards and follow their directions
- Please talk to children to ensure that they understand the importance of using caution and following all traffic signals.
  - Note that there are not stop signs at every intersection, especially on Oak and Elm Streets, which are heavily used thoroughfares to Crow Island, Skokie, and Washburne.
- We STRONGLY recommend that all students who bike, skateboard, or scooter to school wear a helmet, regardless of age.
- Students should bike on the sidewalk wherever possible (except in Village of Winnetka business districts where bikes must be walked), and be respectful to pedestrians. Also, children are expected to walk their bikes through crosswalks.
- Each elementary school also has specific traffic procedures and parking restrictions that are enforced by police. We encourage you to review these procedures and contact your building administrator if you are unclear.
- The speed limit in our school zones is 20 miles per hour during school days. For the safety of all, please follow the posted speed limit.
- Recommended safe routes to each neighborhood school are as follows:
  - **Crow Island School**
  - **Greeley School**
  - **Hubbard Woods School**



"I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocol (SRP)

The Winnetka Public Schools is utilizing the ""I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocol, which includes a consistent vocabulary regarding response to a variety of unforeseen situations. For students, this provides continuity of expectations and actions throughout their educational career. For staff, this becomes a simpler process for training and drills. For first responders, the common vocabulary and protocols establish a greater predictability that persists through the duration of an incident. Students and staff will practice Standard Response Protocol throughout the course of emergency drills this year. In June 2025, over 50 staff members and first responders engaged in Reunification Training led by "I Love U Guys" personnel.

The "I Love U Guys" Foundation's programs for response and reunification are used in more than 50,000 schools, districts, departments, agencies, organizations and communities around the world. They are created through the research-based best practices of school administrators, psychologists, public space safety experts, families, and first responders.

Text For Help

The Safe, Secure and Healthy Schools Resolution, passed by the Board in September 2022, solidified the District's commitment to ensuring students, staff, parents and community members have access to an additional resource to report concerns of any kind regarding themselves or others. As a result, the District has recently partnered with SAFE2HELP Illinois. Safe2HELP is a resource tailored for teens and pre-teens, but is open to all members of the Winnetka community, including staff. A concerned person can dial 844–4-SAFEIL or text "SAFE2 (72332)" and be connected by text message with a licensed social worker.. While we encourage students, staff and families to report concerns within our schools, allowing us to follow our internal safety protocol, we also want to ensure there is awareness of this reporting option outside of school hours.

Support for Mental Health

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) offers resources for parents and teachers in talking to children about a variety of topics. In addition, each of our five schools is staffed with a school psychologist and at least one full time social worker. We highly recommend that students and families access the resources available in their schools. Each of the five schools incorporate the four anchor strategies of RULER's Social Emotional Learning curriculum as a means to support these needs amongst our students and comply with state learning standards. The State of Illinois requires all public schools to include social emotional learning standards in annual instructional delivery.



BE SMART

Safe Storage

The Board's **Safe, Secure and Healthy Schools Resolution** included an update to our Parent/Student handbook to include information about the obligation of any parent who is a gun owner to comply with state guidance regarding secure storage of firearms under **Illinois HB2254 Safe Gun Storage Act**. All families must sign the Parent/Student handbook annually as children are registered for the new school year.

The **Be SMART framework** is designed to help parents and adults normalize conversations about gun safety and take responsible actions that can prevent child gun deaths and injuries.

- **Secure** all guns in your home and vehicles
- **Model** responsible behavior around guns
- **Ask** about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes
- **Recognize** the role of guns in suicide
- **Tell** your peers to be SMART

Learn more about secure arm storage here: **Gun Safety Resources | Be SMART (besmartforkids.org)** If you have a firearm that you would like to surrender to be destroyed, you may bring it to the Winnetka Police Department at 410 Green Bay Road at any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is a service the Police Department has always offered, so please keep this in mind if you have a gun you may want to destroy. The **Village Code** indicates that no one will be asked for identification, nor will they be subject to prosecution for turning in any handgun or ammunition.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) Resources for Families

As artificial intelligence becomes more common in everyday life, children may encounter AI-generated images, videos, voices, messages, or chatbots that can look and sound very real. Families can help by reminding children that not everything they see or hear online is authentic. If a message, photo, video, or voice recording is surprising, upsetting, embarrassing, or asks them to take action, students should pause and check with a trusted adult before responding, sharing, or believing it.

Children should also avoid sharing personal information with AI tools or chatbots, including their full name, address, passwords, school schedule, private family information, photos, or information about classmates. AI tools can be helpful, but they can also provide inaccurate information or be used to impersonate others. A simple family reminder is: pause, protect your information, check what you see is true, and ask an adult when something does not feel right.







District/School Safety & Security Protocol

- District and building safety plans are thoroughly developed in conjunction with the Winnetka Police and Fire Departments and reviewed on an annual basis as an administrative team and school staff at all five campuses.
- The district is committed to sending out timely messages if/when an emergency occurs in one of our buildings.
- Drills are practiced by all adults and students unless parents opt their children out of the drill (this must be allowed by law).
- The district has completed the implementation of upgraded security features for all of our schools, including secure vestibules, new cameras and other security features throughout all five buildings.
- Custodial and maintenance teams engage in regular building sweeps to ensure all exterior doors are closed and locked.
- All school visitors must submit their ID to be scanned before being allowed access to the building. IDs will be held and badging distributed to identify visitors until they exit the building.
- All employees, outside vendors (club sponsors, contractor, utility providers, etc.) and substitutes, must undergo a state and federal background check before being allowed to work in our schools/access our buildings. This includes all employees of Bulley & Andrews and associated vendors completing construction and renovation work.

Communication Regarding Safety Matters

The chart below outlines current and adapted District communications responses relating to safety matters.

Communication Scenario	Corresponding Protocol
Unplanned Ambulance/Police/Fire visit to school for medical support for individual student or staff member	Timely communication from Principal to class or whole school (depending on what was observed/occurred)
Unplanned or accidental activation of safety drill (i.e. alarm triggered accidentally, smoke in kitchen at Washburne)	Timely communication from Principal to whole school (depending on what was observed/occurred) to notify families
Planned safety drill including Police Department/Fire Department	Proactive communication to families from Principal/Director of Safety & Security before drill with opportunity to opt a student out
Safety concern related to building, students or staff (i.e. situation that requires Police involvement and/or implementation of Standard Response Protocol)	Timely tailored communications to families based on situation from Principal, Director of Safety & Security or Superintendent + Message comes from Superintendent & Director of Safety & Security + Message always acknowledges any involvement of Winnetka Police and Fire



Safety Tips for the Fall and Winter Months

In partnership with the Winnetka Police and Fire Departments, Director of Safety & Security Ray Finnerty shares a few safety tips to keep in mind during the colder months and upcoming holiday travel season:

- Be cautious around Lake Michigan, particularly regarding letting children or pets play on or around ice. It is never recommended to walk on the lake, even if it appears frozen.
- Be sure to unplug holiday lights or keep them on a timer to prevent fire.
- If you have a fireplace in your home, first ensure your chimney is cleaned annually.
- If you will be out of town, avoid posting specifics on social media, use a timer for lights, and ensure a friend or neighbor is able to help bring in any packages that may arrive while you are away.
- Remain vigilant regarding financial fraud and regularly check bank statements to ensure there aren't any unauthorized charges. Thieves typically start small to see if they are able to remain undetected.
- For your safety, use caution when shoveling or snow-blowing. If you utilize a plow service, ensure children and pets are not outside while snow removal is in progress.
- Pack an emergency kit in your car containing blankets, flares, non-perishable food and water first aid kit, flashlight with extra batteries in an abundance of caution for travel in inclement weather.
- In the case of extreme cold, leave faucets on at a steady drip throughout the day to avoid frozen pipes.





