Park Ridge Schools

Student & Parent Handbook

2026-2027 School Year

West Ridge Elementary School & East Brook Elementary School

Please keep this handbook for easy reference.

Park Ridge Elementary Schools
East Brook / West Ridge
Park Ridge, New Jersey

September, 2026

Dear Parents:

On behalf of the faculty and support staff, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back to the start of the 2026-2027 school year. We hope that you and your children had a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable summer.

The Student & Parent Handbook includes information that is important for you as parents to know, as well as information for the students. We hope that you will take time to review the information that is provided for you, as well as take the opportunity to review and discuss the information that is included for the students. It is hoped that by presenting information, that everyone will understand expectations here at the schools. If you have any questions with regard to the information contained in the Handbook, please call the school.

We will be scheduling Back to School Nights in September to give you an overview of the school year. East Brook will be held on Thursday, September 4th and West Ridge on Thursday, September 10th.

Sincerely,

Kevin Stokes	Melissa Ballaera
Principal	Principal
East Brook Elementary School	West Ridge Elementary School

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Park Ridge Board of Education Philosophy of Education

1. **We believe that education itself is:**
    a. A process through which each individual is led to develop his/her fullest potential mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually.
    b. A process of growth and development sensitive to societal need and changes.
2. **We believe that education involves:**
    a. Individualized goals and expectations for each student.
    b. Emphasis on methods and approaches of problem solving based upon an accumulation of attitudes, understandings, concepts, and skills.
    c. Creation of an environment conducive to stimulating interest, inquiry, and willingness to work.
    d. Utilization of past experiences and existing abilities or skills as foundations and stepping stones toward enriched experiences and expanded abilities.
    e. Guidance, direction, and encouragement on the part of the teacher.
    f. The process of continuous evaluation in which student, parent, and teacher participate.
3. **We believe that education results in:**
    a. Acquisition of, and ability to use, basic competencies necessary for effective citizenship in a world undergoing rapid and technological change.
    b. Development of wholesome character and desirable conduct.
    c. Outlets for growth and enjoyment through cultural and recreational media.
    d. Understanding and appreciation of our national heritage and basic government structure.
    e. Habits and/or practices conducive to health, safety, and well being.

Our Mission Statement

The Park Ridge School District is committed to the mission of educating all students to achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels. The district will nurture all students to be lifelong learners, ethical and responsible citizens, and independent, productive members of a global society.

Park Ridge Public Schools
Park Ridge, New Jersey

Board of Education of the Borough of Park Ridge

Members:

Mr. David Bradler, President
Ms. Rachelle Browne, Vice President
Ms. Natalie Jowett Agoos
Shanai Jensen
Rosemarie Malloy
Matt Rozzi
Amara Wagner

Central Office Administration

Dr. Patrick Bernardo, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Robert Wright, Business Administrator, Board Secretary

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Chain of Communication

School related concerns involving a student are usually resolved with the teacher or the principal. Parents are asked to communicate their concerns following the chain of communication noted below. Concerns are usually resolved with the person(s) most directly involved with the situation. By following the chain of command noted below, it is hoped that concerns and conflicts can be resolved at the level where the problem exists. Problems not resolved should be brought to the attention of the person next in line. Parents are reminded that discussion of an individual problem in front of their child, or with a person not associated with the concern is counterproductive and does not address the issue.

Concern of Teacher / Adult Supervisor

1. Teacher/Professional Staff Member/Adult Supervisor addresses concern with student(s) involved.
2. Teacher/Professional Staff Member addresses concern with parent/guardian.
3. Teacher/Professional Staff Member/Adult Supervisor addresses concern with Principal, address concern with parent / guardian.
4. Principal facilitates communication between parent/guardian and appropriate school personnel. (In some instances, the student may also be involved in the process at this level so as to address the concerns of all parties involved.)
5. Principal addresses concerns with Superintendent.
6. Superintendent communicates concern to the Board of Education.

Concern of Parent / Guardian of Student

1. Parent / Guardian address concern to Teacher/Professional Staff Member.
2. Parent / Guardian address concern to the Principal.
3. Parent / Guardian address concern to the Superintendent.
4. Parent / Guardian address concern to the Board of Education.

East Brook School / West Ridge School
Park Ridge, New Jersey

East Brook School / West Ridge School 2026-2027
1:00 PM Dismissal/Conference Date Schedule

Evaluation Periods

Evaluation Period Closes	Number of School Days	Evaluation Forms Distributed
December 3, 2026	60 Days	December 11, 2026
March 17, 2027	61 Days	March 25, 2027
June 23, 2027	61 Days	June 23, 2027

Parent Conferences

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 – 2:00-3:30
Thursday, December 3, 2026 – 2:00-3:30 & 6:00-8:00
January 14, 2027 – 2:00-3:30 & 6:00-8:0

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1:00 PM Dismissal Days

Monday, October 12, 2026 – Professional Development
Wednesday, November 25, 2026 – Thanksgiving Recess
Wednesday, December 2, 2026 – Parent Conferences
Thursday, December 3, 2026 – Parent Conferences
Friday, December 4, 2026 – Contractual Conference Give Back
Wednesday, December 23, 2026 – Holiday Break
Thursday, January 14, 2027
Friday, January 15, 2027
Monday, June 21, 2027
Tuesday, June 22, 2027 – 6th Grade Promotion
Wednesday, June 23, 2027– Last day of School

West Ridge Kindergarten Information for the 2026-2027 School Year

Kindergarten Parent Orientation: Thursday, January 28, 2027 / 6:30 PM
Kindergarten Registration: Begins Monday, February 1, 2027 / 9:30 – 2:30 Daily

All paperwork must be present at registration, most notably proof of child's age and proof of residency on the same side of town as the school you are applying to.

West Ridge Elementary School 2026-2027
Faculty and Room Numbers
Mrs. Melissa Ballaera, Principal
Ms. Erin McCarthy, Secretary to the Principal, Mrs. Toni Sansone, Secretary

Classroom Teachers	Grade	Room No.
Stephanie Hemmer (Melinda Zambrano)	Preschool	3
Kari McPartland	Preschool	7
Jennifer Burchell	Kindergarten	1
Kristin Tobin	Kindergarten	2
Abigail Donnellan	Grade 1	10
Christy McCallister	Grade 1	8
Stephanie O'Brien	Grade 1	9
Nancy Chiocco	Grade 2	9
Erin O'Brien	Grade 2	5
Eleni Bubalo	Grade 3	11
Meredith Gavzy	Grade 3	6
Christine Scheer	Grade 3	12
Julie Appelblatt	Grade 4	18
Lesley Riley	Grade 4	17
Danielle Fernandez	Grade 5	19
Sophia Almeida	Grade 5	20
Karen Finnerty	Grade 6	14
Jeanne Kohan	Grade 6	15
Alyssa Velazquez (Emily Manghisi)	Grade 6	13

Special Subject Area Teachers

Emily Fliesser	Physical Education	Multipurpose Room
Luke Ostrow	Music	16
Krista Baumuller	Art	16
Lynsey Brimigion	TechnologyMedia	Media Center
Kevin Grzybek	Instrumental Music	Band Room/Kitchen
Marzieh Farzad	Spanish	VR
Francoise Moffitt	French	VR
Jennifer O'Riordan	Health	A4

Support Services

Carrie Bianchi	School Nurse	Office Area
Christine Dunay	Resource Center	Trailer
William Allen	Resource Center	Trailer
Joanne DeSimone	Resource Center	Trailer
Alexis Potkulski	Multisensory	Trailer
William Musto	Resource Center	Trailer
Dyana Kent	Basic Skills/Literacy	A-3
Karen Yates	Basic Skills	A-1
Janice Schmidt	Basic Skills	A-1
Lauren Conrad	Speech	Trailer
Kim Wagreich	Speech	Trailer
Brigitte Walsh	OWLS G & T	Band
Keith Plucinski	ESL	VR
Tatum Gonzales	Student Support Specialist	A-2
Sheli Dansky	PT	A-3
Cate Hutchison	OT	A-3

Child Study Team

Kristie Khoe	LDT/C	A-2
Isabella Zigman	Social Worker	A-2
Melanie Greenwood	Social Worker	A-2

Custodial Staff

Robert Irvine	Day Custodian	Steve Irvine	Night Custodian

P.T.O.

All parents are encouraged to join and support the activities of your school's P.T.O. It is an active organization and one that is very supportive of the school programs. Your P.T.O. provides both parents and teachers many opportunities to improve the learning environment of your school. Your support of the P.T.O. and its many programs is counted on, so that together we can make our elementary schools the best experience it can be for the children. Please refer to the West Ridge PTO Website https://wrpto.membershiptoolkit.com/home.

2026-2027 West Ridge PTO President
Mrs. Caley Svensson

ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

STUDENTS MAY NOT ARRIVE AT SCHOOL PRIOR TO 8:15 AM

Parents who drive their children or "carpool" to school are to pull over to the curb when dropping off their children so as to ensure the children's safety and maintain the "flow" of traffic at the beginning of school. Drop off means that only the children will get out of the car. Once your child, or the children in the carpool have been dropped off, parents are encouraged to depart quickly as a courtesy to others and to alleviate the number of cars. Please park in the parking lot and walk your child to the door if you need to help your child out of the car.

Students who walk to school should use the sidewalks and walk to the right. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing oncoming traffic. When crossing intersections, cross at those places where a crossing guard is present. Avoid "horseplay" so as to prevent injury. We ask that those children walking to school be considerate and respect the property of others. **AVOID STRANGERS AND REPORT ANY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES TO YOUR TEACHER OR TO THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL.**

Students riding a bicycle are to observe the rules of the road and are required by law to wear a helmet. Bicycles should **NOT** be ridden on school grounds during normal school hours for safety reasons. Because of the large number of cars and people in and around the school, students are to walk their bikes on school grounds. Students are to use the bike racks provided and are encouraged to purchase a lock. The school cannot guarantee the security of bicycles ridden to school.

Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters

The riding of electric bicycles and electric scooters on school grounds is strictly prohibited. This also includes regular bikes and scooters. If you ride them to school, you must walk them from the moment you enter school property and until you exit the property at dismissal

DAILY SCHEDULE

Students will not be allowed to enter the building before 8:15. Supervision for students will begin at 8:15.

8:15 AM	Students in **kindergarten** and **first grade** who arrive between 8:15 and 8:30 must enter through the outside entrance to the Multi-purpose room. Supervision will be provided in the MPR for these children. (When band is practicing – we will use the lower entrance way). Students in grades 4, 5, & 6 will enter the building through the main entrance. Students in grades 2-3 will enter using the lower entrance. Students will wait outside their classroom doors in inclement weather. A teacher will supervise the students. When there is good weather students in grades 2-6 will wait outside with the supervising teacher until 8:30 when the students may walk down to their classrooms.
8:35 AM	Students enter their classrooms
8:40 AM	Homeroom and Morning Announcements
	(Students arriving to their rooms after morning announcements have started will be marked late.)
8:45 AM	ACADEMIC WORK BEGINS
11:30 AM	LUNCH RECESS BEGINS
12:25 PM	STUDENTS PICKED UP BY THEIR TEACHERS FOR AFTERNOON SESSION
	(Students who leave for lunch and arrive to their rooms after 12:25 P.M. will be marked late)
3:20 PM	STUDENT DISMISSAL – **All students must be picked up by 3:30 or be signed up for the after-school EXTRAS Program.**

K- 3:10
1st & 2nd – 3:15
3rd – 6th – 3:20

DISMISSAL

Kindergarten students will be dismissed at 3:10. Students in grades 1 & 2 will be dismissed at 3:15. Students in grades 3-6 will be dismissed at 3:20 PM. **However, t**here may arise an occasion when students will be detained past 3:20 PM (classroom discipline infractions, incomplete assignments, etc.). No student will be detained past 3:30 PM unless parents are notified. If your child has a standing appointment on any given day (i.e. Religious instruction), parents are asked to notify the teacher so as to avoid conflicts with these commitments. While it is sometimes inconvenient when a child is detained, please realize that your child's teacher is trying to instill positive behavior and work habits.

Once dismissed, students should not re-enter the building unless it is absolutely necessary. Children are to report directly home unless prior arrangements have been made with their parents to do otherwise (i.e., visit a friend's home).

STUDENTS MAY NOT REMAIN ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS AT DISMISSAL UNLESS THEY HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A TEACHER OR ARE INVOLVED IN A SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITY.

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

Classroom doors are locked at the end of the day when teachers attend meetings or leave the building. A student who has forgotten papers, books, etc. **will be permitted back into the building until 3:45 PM**. The student will be required to be accompanied by an adult, preferably a parent.

No student or parent is allowed to enter a classroom after school hours unless they are accompanied by school personnel, i.e., Principal, Teacher, Custodian, Office Staff.

DELAYED OPENING DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that the opening of school is delayed because of inclement weather, Park Ridge Elementary Schools will open at 10:05 AM. Lunch and dismissal time will be at the regular times. Our Emergency Notification System will call to alert parents that the opening of school has been delayed. You will also be notified by email and/or text if this happens and we will post updates on our West Ridge twitter feed. **PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL**.

Preschool Schedule for Delayed Opening
10:05 AM – 12:25 PM - Morning Session
1:00 PM -3:20 PM – Afternoon Session

UNANTICIPATED EARLY DISMISSAL

On occasion during the winter months, weather conditions have necessitated a 1:00 PM dismissal. Each parent is asked to complete a form at the beginning of the year which gives instructions as to the arrangements you have made in the event of an early dismissal. The decision to close is usually made **by 11:00 AM,** this information is used by the school and its designated personnel to inform parents in the event of an early closing. **It is important that this information be accurate and kept up to date. You will be informed via our Emergency Notification System or Constant Contact of any unanticipated closings**.

Students who have brought lunch will be provided with a short break and milk will be served to those students who have ordered it. No students will be dismissed for lunch.

1:00 PM Dismissal

Periodically throughout the course of the year, students will be dismissed at 1:00 PM for Parent / Teacher Conferences or Staff Development meetings. Parents are reminded that these dates are listed on the monthly calendar and on p.4 of this handbook. Time is allotted on those days for students to have a light snack. **Since snacks will be in the classrooms and a number of children have nut allergies, we are not permitting any snacks containing peanut butter or any other nut products.** Milk is served to those who have ordered it and the PTO customarily serves bagels for those who order them.

STUDENT DISMISSAL OR RELEASE FROM SCHOOL DURING THE DAY

A student will be dismissed from school during regular school hours upon the presentation of a note from the parent or guardian. Students will be released to their parents or person authorized by the parent as stated in the note. Students will **NOT** be released to persons unknown to school personnel unless the individual can substantiate their identification as is stated in the note received from the parent or guardian.

Parents must always come into the office to sign out and pick up the child. While this may be inconvenient to some people, it insures your child's safety is our most important concern.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

According to law, (N.J.S.A. 18A:36), attendance in school is compulsory for children between the ages of six and sixteen: and according to universally accepted norms, students cannot benefit from the educational program of the school unless attendance is regular and uninterrupted. Policy 5200 of the Park Ridge Board of Education states:

"The Board of Education requires that pupils enrolled in the schools of this district attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of this state. The educational program of this district is predicated on the presence of the pupil and requires the continuity of instruction and classroom participation. The regular contact of pupils with one another in the classroom and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose...Pupils absent from school for any reason are responsible for the completion of assignments missed because of their absence…Prolonged or repeated absences, excused or unexcused, from school or from class, deprive the pupil of the classroom experience deemed essential to learning and may result in retention at grade level…"

Our goal is to ensure that every student attends school regularly. In order to learn, students need to be at school. "Making up work" never replicates the learning that happens with the teacher in the classroom. **Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school.** Routines and expectations regarding good attendance begin at a very young age. As children grow older and more independent, families still play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school – regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is **chronically absent** – which means missing 18 or more days over the course of an entire school year. Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9th grade good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

ABSENCES

Parents are asked to call the school the morning your child is absent. The office telephone number is **201-573-6000-ext. 3000 for West Ridge School**. **Calls should be made no later than 8:30 AM. Requests for missed work should be made at this time.**

Children returning to school after an absence of three or more consecutive school days are required to bring a doctor's note and submit it to the main office/nurse. **If a student is sent home with a temperature (i.e., any contagious symptoms such as pink eye, rashes, diarrhea or vomiting) the child must remain home until they have been FREE of the fever and symptoms, without the aid of medication, for 24 hours. If a student is absent from school due to any type of illness, the student may NOT attend evening events.**

TARDINESS TO SCHOOL

Students are expected to attend school during the established school hours. Students accumulating more than **THREE (3) LATES during the course of each marking period** can be subject to the consequences outlined below.

While the Park Ridge Board of Education and the school administration consider attendance at school the parent's and student's primary responsibility, it is understood that there are occasions which might prevent the most conscientious student from arriving on time. Doctor's and/or dentist's appointments are examples of such occasions. Submission of a doctor's or dentist's note upon the arrival at the office will exclude that late from consideration of the consequences resulting from excessive lateness to school. Once the student has arrived for school late three times during the course of the marking period the Administrator will use the consequences listed below as appropriate for the child and situations. Consequences will escalate as the student continues to be late for school. Consequences can elevate to retention of grade level if the student is found to have missed so much time, that the curriculum has not been properly accessed to proceed to the next grade.

VISITORS TO THE BUILDING

ALL VISITORS MUST REPORT TO THE MAIN OFFICE WHEN ENTERING THE BUILDING. THIS INCLUDES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER SCHOOL. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE PARENTS TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT FIRST SIGNING IN AT THE MAIN OFFICE.

The safety and security of all students is the utmost concern here at the school. The school doors will be locked between the hours of 8:45 am and 3:15 pm. Access to the school will be limited to the main entrance and all visitors will have to "Buzz" the office in order to gain access to the school. School personnel have been directed to allow only those who have identified themselves through the closed monitoring system. **All visitors (including parents) MUST REPORT TO THE MAIN OFFICE AND SIGN IN.**

PARKING

ALL NUMBERED SPACES IN THE FRONT AND SIDE LOTS ARE RESERVED FOR FACULTY AND STAFF. PARKING IN BACK OF THESE CARS AND BLOCKING THEM IN IS PROHIBITED. While there is not a lot of parking, faculty and staff must have priority so as to meet their responsibilities before, during, and after school.

Parents are reminded that it is illegal to park on crosswalks and that the **"No Parking Zones"** are reserved for emergency vehicles. Parents picking up their children must pull over to the curb on a space available basis. **DOUBLE PARKING IN THE DRIVEWAY IS PROHIBITED. Under no circumstances, should parents stop their vehicles and direct their child to cross over to the car, thus stopping the flow of traffic**. Do not park on crosswalks and watch carefully for students and parents crossing in front of school and on the side of school on the crosswalks. The side parking area should be used to park at dismissal.

LOST AND FOUND

There is a lost and found kept in the lobby. Parents can help by seeing to it that all articles of clothing that a child wears to school are labeled, especially lunchboxes, water bottles and sweatshirts. Parents are invited and encouraged to check the lost and found at any time of the year. Articles not claimed, are donated or disposed of periodically throughout the year.

LUNCHROOM

Children in Grades K- 6 may remain for lunch at the school. Students going home for lunch must be signed out for lunch in the office. They will be **dismissed at 11:30 AM** and should **return to the school by 12:25 PM. Parents who drop off lunches are to place them on the table in the front lobby. The child's name must be on the lunch bag so it can be delivered directly to the child. It will be delivered at the appropriate time by the sixth grade student workers. Parents are not to drop off lunches in the cafeteria, the classroom or wait in the hallway to give students lunches.**

THE SCHEDULE FOR THOSE STUDENTS REMAINING IN SCHOOL FOR LUNCH IS AS FOLLOWS:

11:30 AM - 11:55 AM	Grades K, 1, 2, .3	**Lunch**
	Grades 4, 5, 6	**Recess**
11:55 AM - 12:25 PM	Grades K, 1, 2, 3	**Recess**
	Grades 4, 5, 6	**Lunch**

All students will be sent outdoors during recess unless severe weather conditions prevent them from doing so. Please have your child dressed appropriately when they leave for school. Please understand that cold weather will not necessarily mean that the children will be indoors. However, during inclement weather days students will remain indoors. Students in grades 1-6 will eat in the multipurpose room and then have recess in designated rooms for the remainder of their lunch period. Classroom teachers will establish acceptable activities for the children in their classes during the recess period. Students will be supervised by the lunchroom supervisors. On days when the multipurpose room is not available, students will eat in their individual homeroom classes or in the courtyard, weather permitting.

Students who bring lunch to school are expected to remain on the school grounds for the entire lunch period. Students who remain at school for lunch on a regular basis will not be permitted to leave the premises unless the school is notified by the parent that the child my leave on any given day. Again, the safety of the children is our priority.

MILK MONEY

Milk is available to all students at school. Milk money will be collected twice during the year. Milk money for the month of *September through the end of January* is due on ***Thursday, September 10,*** and again in **January, 2027 at which time you will receive a reminder** for *the months of February through June*. A notice will be sent prior to the collection date notifying parents of the cost of milk for that time period. In the event that a student is absent, no refunds can be made. Parents are asked to enclose ***either a check or money order*** – ***NO CASH*** for the ***EXACT*** amount in an envelope, indicating the child's name, teacher, and choice of milk. Checks should be made payable to the **Park Ridge Board of Education. Parents with more than one child are asked to send milk money for each child separately and not combine the orders and money.**

SPECIAL LUNCH DAY, PIZZA & ICE CREAM DAY PARENTS

Parents assisting with the distribution of lunches on Special Lunch Days and those selling ice cream are asked to sign in at the main office and comply with the procedures established in the lunchroom. It is very important that consistent behavioral expectations be maintained by the lunchroom supervisors**. For safety reasons, parent volunteers should not bring younger siblings, who do not yet attend West Ridge, into the lunchroom.** Please make arrangements for your child care to avoid this situation. We ask that parents exit the lunchroom within a reasonable time period after serving lunch. Your cooperation is appreciated.

LUNCHROOM BEHAVIOR

All general school rules are in effect in the lunchroom. All activity is to stop when the whistle is blown so that directions can be given. Students are expected to demonstrate proper table manners and be considerate of others at all times.

Students should remain seated at their assigned table. If they need to leave their seat or need assistance, they must raise their hands to get the attention of the lunchroom aide. No food or drink is permitted outside the lunchroom unless permission is obtained from the classroom teacher or lunchroom supervisor.

All general school rules are in effect while students are on the playground. They are to play in designated areas. They are to gain permission of the lunchroom supervisor before re-entering the building.

CONTACT SPORTS/ACTIVITIES ARE NOT PERMITTED AT RECESS

This includes wrestling, tackling, pushing, knocking other students to the ground, grabbing clothing, pile-ups or any other inappropriate physical contact. Any student reported for such a violation will receive at least one lunch detention. Repeated infractions will result in multiple days lunch, before/after school detentions, suspension during the lunch recess period or suspension from school.

TELEPHONE

Please make telephone calls to the teachers after 3:20 PM. Students are not permitted use of the school office telephone, either to make or receive calls, **ONLY IN CASES OF EMERGENCY.** Calls concerning after school activities, forgotten books, or supplies are not considered emergency calls. We cannot relay routine messages to your child during the school day. Emergency messages will always be delivered, but reminders about doctor's appointments, after school activities, etc. cannot be accommodated. Email remains the best way to communicate with your child's teacher. Please DO NOT try to contact your child via cell phone during the school day, as student cell phone use is prohibited.

Students cannot use cell phones, Apple watches, or any other portable, personal device to contact parents during the school day. If this happens, we will hold the device in main office to be picked up afterschool.

PARTIES

Class parties may be scheduled to celebrate special holidays or occasions. Classroom teachers will plan appropriate activities with class parents throughout the school year. If a parent decides to send in a treat for his/her child's birthday at school, the food is expected to be healthy and students will take it home to consume there. Birthday party invitations may NOT be distributed at school. Please be aware of children with peanut allergies and other food allergies.

FIRE DRILL/FIRE ALARM/SAFETY DRILLS

In the event that the fire alarm sounds, everyone **MUST** exit the building, by order of the Park Ridge Fire Department. In addition, **N.J. statue (18A:41:1) requires that the building principal conduct at least one fire drill each month.** All students are to exit and re-enter the building in a quiet and orderly manner so that directions can be given.

Safety Drills will also be held during the year. An announcement will be made over the public address system that "We are now conducting a Safety Drill." One of the Safety Drills is a Lockdown Drill. During a Lock Down Drill students will be directed by their teacher to sit together on the floor. The teacher will close the classroom door and turn off the lights. No noise of any kind is permitted during this time and students remain out of sight. Once the building has been checked, in collaboration with the Park Ridge Police Department, an announcement will be made that the Lock Down is over. The other Safety Drills include Shelter in Place, Non-Fire Evacuation and Bomb Threat.

CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS & EMAIL

Under no circumstances should laptops be left in unsupervised areas. Unsupervised areas include the lunchroom, library, unlocked classrooms, hallways, and all outdoor space. Any laptop left in these areas is in danger of being stolen. If a laptop is found in an unsupervised area, it will be taken to the Principal's office. The student will face the following consequences, assuming there were no special circumstances.

1st Offense	Laptop returned to student – warning is given. No parent notification.
2nd Offense	Laptop will be held until dismissal. Parent is notified via letter.
3rd Offense	Laptop held until morning arrival the following day. Meet with principal.
4th Offense	Laptop privileges are suspended for 30 days.
5th Offense	Laptop Privileges are suspended for the remainder of the school year.

Inappropriate use of the laptop computer during instructional time will result in consequences determined by the Principal. Students are not permitted to e-mail anyone outside of the school building during the school day. Students who do not comply with this rule will be subject to consequences determined by the Principal.

Cellphones are permitted in school, however **must** be turned **off** and **remain in the child's backpack for the entirety of the school day.** Calling or texting during the school day is prohibited. *If they are misused*, they will be confiscated and parent(s) will be notified to pick them up after school in the main office at the end of the day. If you need to get an urgent message to your child during the school day, it is strongly advised that you call the main office so that office staff can deliver the message to your student. Please do not email the classroom teacher with an urgent message during the school day as they may not have the opportunity to read it in time.

**Apple watches or other types of Smart watch will be treated in the same light as cell phones. They will be kept in backpacks for the duration of the school day and can be accessed immediately at the end of the school day.

SCHOOL WIDE DISCIPLINE GUIDE

The faculty, staff, and administration make every effort to guarantee that every child has the opportunity to attend school in an atmosphere where the teaching/learning process can happen most effectively. We believe that each student can behave appropriately in school. Behavior which creates a disruption to the education process, and/or prevents others from learning, cannot be tolerated.

Our philosophy is that students are responsible for their own actions, and are able to control their behavior so as to allow every child in the class the opportunity to learn.
As a result, the following discipline guide has been established:

- Students are expected to arrive on time for school and class.
- Students are expected to respect the rights of every person in the school and authority of every adult.
- All students must respect other students' property, as well as the property of the school.
- Students are expected to respect and abide by established classroom rules and procedures, as well as the rules listed for the lunchroom and the playground.
- Inappropriate physical contact, teasing, bullying, harassing, and intimidating will not be tolerated.
- The use of inappropriate language will not be allowed.
- Hats must be removed once students enter the building and are not to be worn at any time during the school day.
- Candy and gum chewing are not permitted.
- Disruption of a teacher's class is not allowed.
- Disregard of an adult's authority will not be permitted.
- Cell phones must be turned off and put away in backpacks during the school day.

Consequences:

If a student **chooses** to violate any of the general school rules, measures will be implemented as is deemed appropriate by the Administrator. Such consequences include: warning, parent phone call, counseling, written statement by student, lunch detention, before or after school detention, parent conference, behavior plan, and possible Intervention & Referral Services or Study Team Intervention.

THE ADMINISTRATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES AT HIGHER LEVELS FOR MORE SEVERE VIOLATIONS, AS WELL AS TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES AT LOWER LEVELS FOR INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS AT GOOD BEHAVIOR.

Threats/Weapons/Violence:

Park Ridge Board of Education Policy **PROHIBITS** students from bringing weapons to school. The following procedures will be followed where cases of threats are made, and/or students are reported for bringing objects that pose a danger to anyone at school:

1. The principal will conduct an investigation from all parties involved. Any evidence, e.g., e-mail, pictures, notes, items, etc. will be collected.
2. The principal will report such incidents to the Superintendent.
3. The parents of the accused student will be notified and a conference held.
4. The police department will be notified and they will file a report.
5. The student making the threat or bringing objects that pose a danger will meet with the elementary school psychologist with a possible referral for a psychiatric evaluation if the counselor feels that the student poses a danger to himself/herself or others.
   Detention, in/out of school suspension, and/or other disciplinary consequences will be imposed.

Character Education is an important part of our program at West Ridge. We expect every student to be thoughtful about all of their words and actions and to treat their classmates with kindness. Teachers teach character education lessons at every grade level and plan many school-wide assemblies and service projects to instill a positive and giving spirit in our students. West Ridge is a close-knit community. Teachers, staff, and students all work together to provide a warm, positive, friendly and inclusive environment for everyone who is a part of our school. We all work together to help students learn to have good judgment and to be kind, confident, forgiving, grateful, respectful, responsible, loyal, patient, and optimistic.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework is assigned to reinforce concepts introduced in the classroom. It is not assigned without purpose or as busy work. Through the sixth grade there are four objectives in assigning homework:

1. To develop a student's study techniques and the ability to complete independent work.
2. To complete independent assignments that are done more effectively in a non-classroom environment.
3. To provide for practice, extra study, and/or reinforcement of content and/or skills.
4. To provide the opportunity for a student to "make-up" work due to an absence.

In order to meet these objectives, the following times should be considered as guidelines for the completion of homework:

Grade K-1*	per teacher discretion
Grade 2	about twenty minutes, several times per week
Grade 3	about thirty minutes, up to four nights per week
Grade 4	about thirty to forty-five minutes daily
Grade 5	about forty-five to sixty minutes daily
Grade 6	about sixty minutes daily

*Homework may be assigned as necessary to meet objectives 1, 2, and in some circumstances, objective 3.

These are considered as general guidelines for the average student. Individual students may require more or less than the designated time allotment. Many assignments are given over a period of days to help teach children about budgeting time and planning out a schedule. If the student leaves long term assignments until the night before the assignment is due, that student will have difficulty keeping within the suggested times.

Please see your child's teacher if you have any questions, or if there is a great discrepancy between the guidelines and the time it takes your child to actually complete assignments on a regular basis.

Parents are encouraged to provide a quiet, well illuminated study area and a regularly scheduled homework time. We urge parents to take an interest in your child's work by asking questions about their assignments, answering your child's questions, and by reviewing your child's homework each night. Please be sure your child has all books and assignments with them when they leave for school each morning.

MAKE-UP WORK

When a student is absent from school, it is expected that work missed will be made up in a timely fashion. Parents should request homework be sent home when calling the school to inform us that the child will not be in attendance**. Requests made after 10:00 AM CANNOT be honored.** If the absence is anticipated to be more than one day's duration, please inform the school so that the classroom teacher can plan accordingly. **Calls to the school about absence and assignments can be made to the school from 8:00-9:00 AM.** Work can be picked up in the lobby, or sent home with a sibling or neighbor. Please realize that there are certain periods during the year when large numbers of students are absent from school on any given day and as a result there are large numbers of parents requesting work be sent home.

Work missed because of absence for vacations will be made up after the student returns to school. It is difficult to anticipate the work that will be completed and parents are urged to plan vacation periods as they coincide with the school calendar. It has been our experience that work prepared in advance has not been completed when students are on vacation from school.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

A calendar of events for the school is issued at the end of the month listing the activities as known for the upcoming month. Parents are encouraged to retain the calendar for reference for those events scheduled during that particular month. Information can also be found on the board in front of the school and the school website.

LIBRARY

Library books are available free of charge to all students. Students in grades K-6 may sign out three items for a two-week period. Magazines circulate for a period of one week. Reference books may be signed out **OVERNIGHT** and must be returned by 9:00 AM. the following day. Failure to do so will result in the privilege being suspended for a period of two weeks. Students not returning books after the due date will receive a warning that the book is overdue. Parents will be notified when and if the book is not returned over an extended period of time. Failure to return the book by the end of the marking period will result in the student's report card being held until the book is returned or paid for. Money will be refunded if the book is found and returned to the library.

RIGHT TO KNOW

Each school maintains Right to Know information as mandated by the federal government. A poster indicating parents' and employees' Right to Know is posted in the main office. Additional information is kept in the main office of each school. Any parent wishing to review this information should come to the main office and request to see it. The district is responsible to provide parents with 48 hours notice prior to the commencement of construction or activities involving the use of hazardous substances.

DRESS

Students are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate for a public school. Clothing should be neat, clean, and safe. It should not be disruptive to the learning environment of the classroom or the school. Students are not to wear cut offs or excessively short pants or skirts. Students should be able to extend their arms down to their side, and should be able to touch the bottom of their skirt or shorts. Students are not to wear half shirts or short shirts that expose the midriff. Halter tops, open back tops, off the shoulder tops, or tops with deep front openings are not permitted. Students must wear footwear (NO FLIP FLOPS) in the building at all times. Students are not permitted to wear hats, hoods, or any type of head gear. Clothing with inappropriate messages will not be allowed in the school. Students will be required to change, or the parents will be contacted so as to make arrangements for other clothing to be brought to school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

We advise students to refrain from wearing jewelry, watches, necklaces, etc. on days when they are scheduled to participate in physical education classes. Aside from it being unsafe during play, it can be misplaced, forgotten or lost when it is removed. **Students are required to wear a lace up type athletic shoe for all physical education activities. Students wearing footwear that could cause an injury will not be permitted to participate in that day's activities and if it happens repeatedly, the infraction may be noted on the report card.**

EXCUSED ABSENCE FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

Students bringing a note to excuse them from physical education class must bring the note to the nurse. Written in the note should be the reason for the excuse and the duration for which the child is to be excused from participation. If the duration is not stated in the note, a second note will be required before the child is able to participate in physical education class. Students who exhibit symptoms of an injury, which could result in further injury, and who DO NOT have a note, will be excluded from participation in physical education. CHILDREN CANNOT BE EXEMPTED FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S NOTE.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Our schools recognize that each child has a unique pattern of growth and development. It is our goal that each child moves on with a feeling of security in his/her ability to learn, and to interact successfully with his/her peers. To meet the individual needs of each youngster, we offer a variety of supportive services in the following areas:

- **BASIC SKILLS**

Those children at the school in need of additional support in reading, language arts, and/or math receive specialized instruction from a certified teacher working in collaboration with the classroom teacher. This assistance is designed to aid the student who needs additional help with a particular skill or concept.

- **INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL SERVICES & CHILD STUDY TEAM**

Parents and/or teachers may ask the Intervention and Referral Services Committee (IRS) for help in dealing with a child who is having difficulties with an academic area, work habits and/or social and behavioral problems. The Intervention and Referral Services Committee is composed of members of the professional staff, the Principal, and a member of the Child Study Team. Once a child has been referred to IRS, the parent is informed, and a meeting takes place to focus on a particular goal and decide on a plan of action. Subsequent follow up meetings are held to determine the progress that has been made and determine a future course of action.

In similar fashion, teachers and/or parents may ask the Child Study Team to suggest ways for them to help their children in the academic, social, or behavioral area after all means have been exhausted in the regular education setting. Parents are welcome to discuss their concerns confidentially with the Principal or any member of the team.

- **RESOURCE ROOM**

Children who have been identified as needing a differentiated program in the academic and/or organizational areas receive individualized small group instruction from a special education specialist. Children identified as needing such a program are tested by the Child Study Team. Parents are informed of the referral and recommendations made as the result of such testing.

- **ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)**

Children whose native language is not English receive daily instruction in reading and language skills from a professional trained in this area.

504 PLAN

Students with special needs not specifically covered under special education statutes may be eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan as prescribed by the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Such areas covered under this law include students diagnosed with hyperactivity disorders, physical impairments, etc. A medical diagnosis is needed for a 504 plan. The parents and school personnel work collaboratively to devise a plan to be followed while the child is in school. This 504 plan is distributed to all school personnel who need to be aware of the child's limitation and is updated on an annual basis.

GIFTED AND TALENTED

Owls Program – This program is for students in grades three through six. Students will have pull-out instruction weekly with the district's Gifted and Talented teacher. The curriculum includes teaching critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, research skills, and self-awareness skills. The students are responsible for making up work they miss during their time out of the classroom.

EMAIL NOTICES

Notices will be sent home **via EMAIL to** parents/guardians for a variety of reasons during the course of the year. Each Monday a general, schoolwide email is sent out to all parents with updates on the coming week's schedule and/or activities. This information is sent home regarding special information as it pertains to each of the schools. Hard copy notices will be sent to only those who do not have email. If you wish to request notices via hard copy and not via email, please contact the main office.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

- **IMMUNIZATION AND MEDICAL RECORDS**
  NJ State Statute requires that all students immunizations be accurate and up-to-date before they can be admitted or attend school. Specific questions regarding immunizations should be directed to the school nurse.

- **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**
  In order to avoid any possible misuse or misapplication of medications, the following procedures have been established for your child's safety and health:

  A. Students will not be permitted to carry medications to or from school under any circumstances. They will not be permitted to keep or consume any medications which have not been cleared through all steps of this procedure.
  B. **ONLY MEDICATIONS WHICH MUST BE ADMINISTERED DURING SCHOOL HOURS ARE PERMITTED IN THE BUILDING.**
  C. Parents must personally deliver any type of medication to be taken by their child during school hours, all medicines delivered by the parent to the school nurse shall be completely and properly labeled, and accompanied by a note from the physician. Medications should be in the original pharmacy container and labeled with the following information:
     The child's name
     The physician's name
     Pharmacy medication number
     Expiration date of the medication, if any
     Name of medication
     Complete directions for the proper administration of the medication

  D. Upon receipt of a child's medication, the school nurse will complete a form containing all pertinent information regarding the medication and its proper administration. The parent will be required to sign the form. A copy is attached at the end of this handbook.

  E. Over-the-counter medications, **INCLUDING ITEMS SUCH AS THROAT LOZENGES AND COUGH DROPS** will be dispensed **only** under the supervision of the nurse upon receipt of **PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN, AND A NOTE FROM THE PHYSICIAN.**

- ***NO ANIMALS OR PETS ARE PERMITTED ON SCHOOL PROPERTY AT ANY TIME.***
  This is due to allergies, student fears, and threat of danger of unknown animals and disruption to the school environment.

- **6th GRADE VACCINATIONS**

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services have revised the administrative rules for school immunizations. The law went into effect as of September 1, 2008. We are advising you of the two vaccines that are required for students entering sixth grade.

A. Tdap Vaccine: (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Acellular Pertussis)
One dose is required for pupils entering Grade Six on or after 9/1/08 and born on or after 1/1/97. Note: A student does not need a Tdap dose until five years after the last DTP/Dtap or Td dose was given.

B. Meningococcal Vaccine:
One dose is required for pupils entering Grade Six on or after 9/1/08 and born on or after 1/1/97. Therefore, this applies to students when they turn 11 years of age and attend sixth grade.

Every child born after 1/1/97 and transferring into a New Jersey school from another state or country on or after September 1, 2008, shall receive one dose of Meningococcal vaccine.

- **HEALTH SCREENINGS**

  Parents should be aware that the nurse conducts health screenings throughout the year. These screenings include the following:

  Vision and Hearing Blood Pressure Height and Weight

  Students ten years of age and over are screened for scoliosis with written parental consent. Parents who have questions or concerns regarding these screenings should address them to the school nurse.

- **INSURANCE**

  Parents have the opportunity to purchase school insurance at the beginning of the school year. Forms and instruction will be sent home the first week of school.

- **EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION OF THE EPI-PEN DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

  Parents who have a child that has an allergy which could result in anaphylaxis in the event of an attack, and whose child will be unable to self-medicate in the event of an attack, must complete a ***Request for Emergency Administration of the Epi-Pen During the School Day*** form available online or in the Nurses office. The parent then gives the school nurse, or their designee, their consent to administer epinephrine, via epi-pen to the student in the event of such a situation. Parents who have questions with regard to this procedure are encouraged to call Mrs. Bianchi, West Ridge School Nurse.

Copies of the Request for the Administration of Medication Form and the Emergency Administration of the Epi-Pen during the School Day may be obtained from the school nurse.

PARK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PARK RIDGE, NEW JERSEY

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students:

The following information is sent to inform all parents, guardians and students of regulations and procedures relative to the availability of pupil records, equal educational opportunity and substance abuse.

SCHOOL RECORDS AVAILABLE TO PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Schools maintain data relative to the education of each pupil. The required records and additional information such as grades, standardized test results, health statistics, attendance, etc. are available to the parents and adult students. Arrangements for access can be made by contacting the school.

Federal and State legislation regarding pupils' records provides certain rights to parents. These rights include provisions for the maintenance, security, conditions of access and the right to appeal parts of the records.

Educational, occupational and military recruiters have access to student information directory pursuant to statutes. Any adult pupil or parent may request in writing to the superintendent to be excused from participating in all recruitment programs or having their name appear in student information directories for recruitment purposes.

Copies of the complete law and details regarding local procedures are available in the school offices upon request.

BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Consistent with Federal and State requirements on non-discrimination, the Park Ridge Board of Education hereby affirms its responsibility to continue to provide all students with equal educational opportunity and all employees equal employment opportunity regardless of race, sexual orientation, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status and non-applicable handicap.

Inquiries on this resolution may be directed to Mr. Troy Lederman, Affirmative Action Officer, 2 Park Avenue, Park Ridge, New Jersey.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

The Park Ridge Board of Education recognizes that misuse of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco is a serious problem. Therefore, it has approved curriculum to inform students of the dangers of use of these substances and administrative procedures for evaluation and treatment of students suspected of being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or a controlled substance.

Copies of N.J. State Law, Park Ridge Board Policies and Administrative Procedures are available in school offices on request.

Further information on any of these regulations can be obtained by contacting any of the school administrators.

Very truly yours,

Dr. Patrick Bernardo
Superintendent of Schools