



DeSoto
COUNTY SCHOOLS

Every Student. Every Employee. Every School.
#TeamDCS

**Elementary/Intermediate
Student and Parent
Handbook
2023-2024 School Year**

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Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents,

I would like to take this opportunity to say I am very excited about this upcoming school year. DeSoto County Schools has been recognized as one of the top school districts in Mississippi, and I truly believe that we have the potential to be one of the best school districts in the nation.

Because I am the parent of a DeSoto County Schools student, I can relate to the needs of our parents. First and foremost, I want to make sure that we have measures in place to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students. I know that every parent wants their children to be safe at school, and I also believe that students must feel safe before learning can take place. Additionally, I want to make sure that our students have every opportunity to be successful in all facets of their lives, including academics and extracurricular activities. As Superintendent, I look forward to seeing our students pursue their goals, and I hope that I can be of assistance to them along the way.

Exciting days lie ahead for DeSoto County Schools, and I appreciate your support of our students and teachers.

Sincerely,
Cory Uselton
Superintendent of Education

DeSoto

COUNTY SCHOOLS



Strategic Plan 2022-2027

DCS LEADERSHIP:

CHARLES BARTON: BOARD MEMBER

MICHELE HENLEY: BOARD MEMBER

SHELIA RILEY: BOARD MEMBER

JOSH SULLIVAN: BOARD MEMBER

JERALD WHEELER: BOARD MEMBER

SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION:

CORY USELTON

MISSION

The DeSoto County School District is dedicated to ensuring world-class academic excellence within a safe learning environment, while providing a variety of exceptional extracurricular programs that foster the physical, social, and emotional growth of all students.

VISION

The DeSoto County School District will be regionally and nationally recognized as a system of superior-performing schools that ignite a passion for learning, while inspiring student success through instructional excellence and exemplary leadership.

Goal 1

Focus on Student Learning

Goal 2

Create and Sustain a Culture of Innovation

Goal 3

Develop and Maintain Structures to Address the Mental Health Well Being of Students and Staff

Goal 4

Recruit, Hire, Train and Retain High Quality Educators and Staff Members

Goal 5

Build Strong Community Partnerships

Instructional Program Accreditation

Our school is part of the DeSoto County School District, which is the largest school district in the state of Mississippi. All elementary and intermediate schools in the district are fully accredited by the Mississippi Department of Education and Cognia, a national accrediting organization. A complete list of DeSoto County Schools' board policies can be found at <https://desoto.msbapolicy.org/DistrictHome/tabid/8379/Default.aspx>

School Admissions (Board Policy JBC)

The DeSoto County School District will comply with age requirements for entry into kindergarten and grade one as prescribed by law.

General Eligibility:

- A. Except for those students who have been legally transferred, each minor child seeking to enroll in the district shall be a resident. All students shall register at the school they are assigned to attend.
- B. Any new student enrolling in the DeSoto County School District or a continuing student whose residence has changed shall be accompanied to enrollment by the custodial parent, legal guardian, or adult agent of a social service agency of the district who shall register the minor child for admission, except students who have been legally transferred. The accompanying adult shall be required to verify his/her residence as herein provided as part of the registration process. At the time of enrollment, the student's social security number will be requested. If no social security number is available to the district, the student's Mississippi Information System (MSIS) number will be used to identify and track the student.
- C. No child will be allowed to enroll in any grade (K-12) or attend any school without a certified birth certificate. No child in grades K through 12 shall be allowed to enroll in or attend any school without a valid immunization certificate. The following are considered valid certificates.
 - 1. Form 121 – Certificate of Compliance
 - 2. Form 122 – Medical Exemption Certificate
 - 3. Temp 121 – Temporary Compliance CertificateThe Temporary Compliance Certificate, Temp 121, is not valid after the date shown. After that date, the principal shall deny school attendance by the child unless the principal is provided another Temporary Compliance Certificate, Temp 121, or a Certificate of Compliance, Form 121, or a Medical Exemption, Form 122.
- D. Subject to the provisions of paragraph E (below), any child who transfers from an out-of-state public or private school in which the state's law provides for a first grade or kindergarten enrollment date subsequent to September 1, shall be

allowed to enroll in the school district at the same grade level as their prior out-of-state enrollment, if:

1. The parent or legal guardian of such child was a legal resident of the state from which the child is transferring;
2. The out-of-state school from which the child is transferring is duly accredited by that state's appropriate accrediting authority;
3. Such child was legally enrolled in a public or private school for a minimum of four weeks in the previous state; and
4. The DeSoto County Superintendent or his designee has determined the child was making satisfactory education progress in the previous state.

E. When any child applies for admission or enrollment, the parent, legal guardian, or child (in the absence of an accompanying parent or legal guardian) shall indicate on the school registration form if the enrolling child has been expelled from any public or private school or is currently party to an expulsion proceeding. Students who have been expelled or suspended by another school district and who subsequently apply for admission to the DeSoto County School District shall not be eligible to enroll in any DeSoto County school until they are eligible for readmission to and have actually attended classes in their previous school or produce a document showing a reinstatement following their suspension or expulsion. If a student enrolls in the DeSoto County School District and the district learns of an expulsion from another district, the student may be immediately dropped from the school roll.

Residence Verification Procedure for All Students:

The definition of residence for school attendance purposes is the student physically resides full-time with his/her parent (must be custodial parent) or legal guardian (as ordered by a judge for non-education purposes), weekdays/nights and weekends, at a place of abode located within the limits of DeSoto County School District year-round. Except for those students who have been legally transferred, each student identified in paragraph B (above) must establish residency in the following manner.

A. Students Living with Parent(s) and Legal Guardian(s)

All legal guardians must provide a certified copy of the filed petition for guardianship, if pending, and final decree, when granted. (The school will contact and meet only with the legal guardian of the student.) When a certified copy of the Court Decree (or petition, if pending) is received such decree or petition must declare that the guardianship was formed for a purpose other than establishing residency for school attendance purposes.

The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of all students must provide the district with a two (2) of the following documents (one of which must be item number one (1) as listed below):

1. Current (within the school year) mortgage documents (no mortgage booklets) or property deed, filed Homestead Exemption Application Form, a tax receipt, apartment/home lease, rental agreement, or tax display document;
2. A utility bill (water, gas, electric-current at time of registration); A utility bill may be accepted in electronic format.
3. DeSoto County automobile registration receipt (valid during current school year);
4. Government mailing documentation (SSI, WIC, Economic Assistance, Medicaid, TANF, or CHIPS);
5. Any other proof deemed acceptable by the school district.

In the event that the above listed requirements cannot be provided, residency may be established by submitting documentation to the Director of Residency.

Parents of students living with another family will be required, when applicable, to provide an "Affidavit of Residency."

B. Homeless Children

When a child is determined to be homeless as defined by the Stewart B. McKinney Act 42 USC Section 11432 (e) and 11302 (a), this school district shall consider and take enrollment action that is in the best interest of the child pursuant to 42 USC 11432 (e) (3).

C. Student Living with Adults Other Than Parents or Legal Guardians, and/or Residing in a Neglected and Delinquent Facility

1. The non-parent(s) claiming district residency must meet the same criteria of subparagraph (a), required of a parent or legal guardian.
2. The adult must provide the school with legal guardianship or custodial papers and provide documentation fully explaining the reason(s) (other than school attendance zone or preference) for this arrangement. The superintendent or his/her designee will make the necessary factual determinations. Examples of situations where guardianship authority of an adult will be recognized to establish residency of the minor include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Death or serious illness of the child's parent(s) or guardian;
 - b. Abandonment of the child;
 - c. Child abuse or neglect;
 - d. Seriously unstable family relationships or undesirable conditions in the home of the child's parents or guardians having a documented detrimental effect on the child;
 - e. Students enrolled in recognized exchange programs residing with host families;
 - f. Incarceration of a parent.
3. Any person who has assumed responsibility for the care and custody of the child shall be expected to begin the process of seeking legal guardianship before enrollment of the child and an approximate completion date must be given.

4. Any legal guardianship formed for the purpose of establishing residency for school district attendance purposes shall not be recognized by the DeSoto County Board of Education.

D. Students of Military Families

1. A pupil complies with the residency requirements for school attendance in a school district if the parent of the pupil is transferred to, or is pending a transfer to, a military installation with this state while on active duty pursuant to an official military order. A school district shall accept an application for enrollment and course registration by electronic means for a pupil who meets these requirements, including enrollment in a specific school or program within the school district.
2. The parent of a pupil who meets these requirements shall provide proof of residence to the school district within ten (10) days after the published date provided on official documentation.
3. The parent may use the address of any of the following as proof of residence.
 - a. A temporary on-base billeting facility.
 - b. A purchased or leased home or apartment.
 - c. Any federal government housing or off-base military housing, including off-base military housing that may be provided through a public-private venture.

E. EL and/or Immigrant

When a child is determined to be a student of immigrant/EL status, this school district shall consider and take enrollment action as described in Section I, under General Eligibility pursuant to Plyer v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202.

1. Any new student enrolling in DeSoto County School District will be required to complete a Home Language Survey upon enrollment.

F. Each time a student changes schools within the district because of a move or academic progression, residency documentation will be required. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must provide the school with two (2) or the following documents (one of which must be item number one (1) as listed below).

1. Current (within the school year) mortgage documents (no mortgage booklets) or property deed, filed Homestead Exemption Application Form, a tax receipt, apartment/home lease, rental agreement, or tax display document;
2. A utility bill (water, gas, electric-current at time of registration);
3. DeSoto County automobile registration receipt (valid during current school year);
4. Government mailing documentation (SSI, WIC, Economic Assistance, Medicaid, TANF, or CHIPS);
5. Any other proof deemed acceptable by the school district.

In the event that the above listed requirements cannot be provided, residency may be established by submitting documentation to the Director of Residency.

Any court ordered procedure shall take precedence over any procedure contained herein. The requirements of Section II (A) above are minimum requirements and this school district may require additional documentation and verification at any time. The provisions of this policy do not apply to students who reside outside of the school district, but who have legally transferred into the school district through employment of the parent with the DeSoto County School District.

Temporary Enrollment

Students will be allowed temporary enrollment status if the following documents are presented and approved by a DCS official.

- A. A temporary immunization form from the DeSoto County Health Department;
- B. A copy of an official birth certificate and a copy of the money order used to order the certificate. Exception: Kindergarten and First Grade must provide the birth certificate upon enrollment. MS Code 37-15-1
- C. An official letter from a lawyer or legal agency that affirms the process for custodial or guardianship process has begun for one of the reasons listed in section II (c) (2) of this policy.

A temporary enrollment can only be issued in an extenuating circumstance by the Director of Residency or his/her designee.

Attendance Policy

The district attendance policy is outlined in detail each year in the *Student Handbook*. Once school has begun, students who enroll in the DeSoto County School District must provide documentation of school attendance prior to that date in accordance with the Mississippi compulsory attendance laws.

Dismissals/Checkouts

Students are not to leave the school campus without permission. Students who must leave school during the day, prior to the scheduled dismissal time, will be released only to a parent/guardian or an adult designee.

Transferring to Another School

When transferring to another school (in or out of district) due to a move or a Board-approved transfer, the following steps must be complete.

1. Notify the principal's office no later than the day before withdrawing.
2. Return all textbooks and library books.
3. Pay all monies owed.
4. Obtain transfer forms. Official records will be sent on request from the new school.

5. If the student receives Special Education services, ask for a copy of his/her IEP to take to the new school.

NOTE: Transfer requests to move from one DeSoto County attendance zone to another within the district must be approved by the Board of Education. The only Board-approved transfers granted are for legal, medical, psychological, and academic reasons.

General Provisions for Grading (Board Policy IHA)

Minimum Standards

Students must demonstrate mastery of the content required for each grade.

The Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards determine content for grades K-5 for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Monitoring Student Progress

Each teacher has the responsibility of identifying pupils who are not making satisfactory progress toward the achievement of grade level or course objectives.

Teachers are encouraged to notify parents during each grading period if students do not meet minimum requirements. Progress Reports will be sent at week four or five of the nine-week period.

Teachers are not required by district policy to take a specified number of grades. However, any grades taken must be posted to the electronic grade book bi-weekly.

The following guidelines apply to all subject areas:

1. The DeSoto County School District requires that the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies be included in the course scope and sequence.
2. Required lesson plans are developed and include all components outlined and approved by the school district.

DeSoto County Schools Grading Scale

A = 90 – 100

B = 80 – 89

C = 70 – 79

D = 65 – 69

F = 0 – 64

Kindergarten science and social studies skills are assessed within the reading standards.

For first, second, and third grade science and social studies, the following grading scale is used.

S = Satisfactory
N = Needs Improvement
U = Unsatisfactory

Grading Policies

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students must master 70% of the Mathematics standards and 70% of the Language Arts standards. In addition, Kindergarten students are expected to exhibit an adequate level of reading proficiency (determined by diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments and classroom data).

Grades 1-5

Each nine-week grade is computed by averaging the grades for those nine weeks. This average will be a compilation of the grades that the teacher has for the student in his/her gradebook including, but not limited to, formative assessments, quizzes, classwork, unit tests, common assessments, etc.

The semester grade is computed by averaging the two nine-week grades. The yearly grade is computed by averaging the two semester grades.

The grading policy for students with disabilities with current Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be consistent with board policy IHFA.

Promotion and Retention (Board Policy IHE)

Kindergarten

Students must meet the following requirements to be promoted to the next grade level:

- 1) Exhibit an adequate level of reading proficiency;*
- 2) Master 70% of the English/Language Arts Standards; and
- 3) Master 70% of the Mathematics Standards.

* Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment and classroom data may be used to determine a student's reading proficiency.

First and Second Grade

Students must meet the following requirements to be promoted to the next grade level:

- 1) A minimum yearly average of 65 in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

Third Grade

Students must meet the following requirements to be promoted to fourth grade:

- 1) A minimum yearly average of 65 in English/Language Arts and Mathematics; and
- 2) Successful completion of the Literacy Based Promotion Act as outlined in Senate Bill 2347.

Fourth and Fifth Grade

Students must meet the following requirements to be promoted to the next grade level:

- 1) A minimum yearly average of 65 in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Literacy Based Promotion (Board Policy ICHI)

In compliance with the *Literacy Based Promotion Act*, it is the intent of this school district to improve the reading skills of Kindergarten –Third Grade students so that every student completing the Third Grade is able to read at or above grade level.

School Promotion

A student may not be assigned a grade level based solely on age or any other factor that constitutes social promotion.

Public School Requirements

If a K-3 student has been identified with a substantial deficit in reading, the teacher will immediately, and with each quarterly progress report, notify parents or legal guardians of the following in writing:

- Determination of a substantial deficit in reading;
- Description of student services and supports presently provided;
- Description of proposed supplemental instruction and support to remediate the student's deficit areas;
- Strategies for parents to use to help students at home; and
- Notification that the student will not be promoted to 4th grade if the student does not achieve a passing score on the Third Grade Reading Gateway Exam.

DeSoto County Schools will provide intensive reading instruction and immediate intervention to each K-3 student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading at any time.

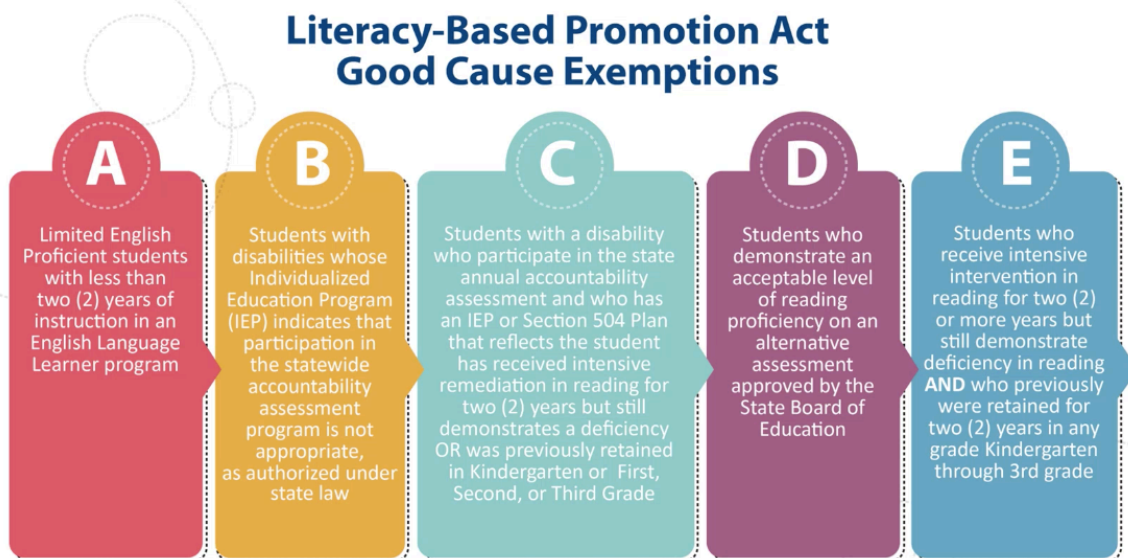
The intensive reading instruction and intervention must be documented for each student in Grades K-3 in an individual reading plan, including, at a minimum the following:

1. The student's specific, diagnosed reading skill deficiencies as determined (or identified) by diagnostic assessment data;
2. The goals and benchmarks for growth;

3. How progress will be monitored and evaluated;
4. The type of additional instruction services and interventions the student will receive;
5. The evidence-based reading instructional programming the teacher will use to provide reading instruction, addressing the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
6. The strategies the student's parents are encouraged to use in assisting the student to achieve reading competency; and
7. Any additional services the teacher deems available and appropriate to accelerate the student's reading skill development.

Good Cause Exemptions

A 3rd grade student who fails to meet the academic requirements for promotion to the 4th grade may be promoted for good cause;



If a student's reading deficiency is not remedied by the end of the student's Third Grade year, as demonstrated by the student scoring above the lowest two (2) achievement levels in reading on the state accountability assessment or on an approved alternative standardized assessment for Third Grade, the student shall not be promoted to Fourth Grade.

Special Education

The Department of Special Education provides support to students with disabilities requiring specialized instruction to enhance the opportunity in the general curriculum. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are implemented to provide instruction in the least restrictive environment and a continuum of services and programming. IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires that all students with disabilities receive education in the general education classroom environment to the maximum extent

appropriate. Some district wide classes have been established to serve students with low incidence disabilities.

Educational programming and services for students with the following disabilities are available after an appropriate eligibility ruling has been established through proper identification and testing procedures. DeSoto County Schools follows the identification and procedures set forth by IDEA and MDE:

Autism (AU)	Language/Speech Impaired (L/S)
Deaf-Blind (DB)	Intellectual Disability (ID)
Multiple Disabilities (MD)	Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
Developmentally Delayed (DD)	Other Health Impaired (OHI)
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	Emotional Disability (EmD)
Visually Impaired (VI)	Hearing Impaired (HI)
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	

Gifted Services

The Department of Gifted Services supports a wide range of opportunities for gifted, ambitious, and high-achieving students.

DeSoto County Schools (DCS) has the largest intellectually gifted population in the state of Mississippi and the largest gifted education staff within the state to support the needs of these students. The Spotlight program serves approximately 2600 students in grades 2-6 with 62 Spotlight teachers.

The Department of Gifted Services promotes chess tournaments, knowledge bowl competitions, writing competitions, speech and debate tournaments, and math, science, and history competitions. The department helps schools with science and inventor fairs. These opportunities drive students to discover their interests and to maximize their potential.

School Libraries

All DeSoto County Schools have well-stocked libraries and full-time librarians with an endorsement in library science. The district provides each library with yearly funds for the purchase of up-to-date materials that support research and reading for pleasure.

Each student visits the school library on a regular schedule and is encouraged to return during open library hours. Books can be found on every level from picture books to young adult literature. Students will find a variety of fiction and non-fiction options as well as periodicals, audio books, artistic material, and books that professionally support teachers.

Computers and printers are available for research, and librarians teach the latest search skills. All school libraries have access to the state-supported search engine – Magnolia. The librarians provide training on the use of Magnolia to all students.

Department of Academic Support/Student Intervention

The Department of Academic Support works with all schools to provide support to students who have difficulty meeting grade level standards in academic progression, as well as, behavioral expectations.

Every school has a designated team that consists of teachers, counselors, and administrators. This team recommends supplemental learning opportunities for students who need support beyond the core instruction (Tier I). This team, also known as the Teacher Support Team (TST), Leadership Team, or Intervention Team, assists classroom teachers with the identification and implementation of academic and behavioral interventions for students who demonstrate need. Parents are encouraged to be a part of this process.

i-Ready will serve as our universal screener and online intervention piece. It also has grade level instructional resources available. Students in all tiers can benefit from working in i-Ready as it automatically assigns a personalized learning path, referred to as MyPath, for students to begin receiving instruction. Teachers can also assign grade-level work to supplement the core curriculum.

According to Mississippi State Board Policy, a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework shall be implemented at each school. Each school's MTSS model may operate differently, however, all will provide at least three levels of instructional support. Each principal will determine how supplemental support will be offered. The classroom teacher is responsible for ensuring that each child receives additional support as needed and for monitoring the student's progress while receiving additional support.

Section 504

A parent, staff member, student, or personnel may request a Section 504 Plan. This request may be made to the school's Section 504 Coordinator. A meeting will be scheduled at the school to discuss a student's possible substantial limitation to access the facility and/or educational benefit. If the student has been ruled ineligible for services under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), but does have a substantial limitation to a major life activity, the district shall convene a team of people knowledgeable of the student's educational needs to review and consider all pertinent information related to the suspected disability. No discrimination against any person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs and practices of the DeSoto County School system.

Title Programs

Title I, Part A – Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies

The purpose of Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and State academic assessments. Title I provides additional instructional resources to help students meet the high academic standards set by the Mississippi Department of Education in Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Testing/Evaluation. All students in Title schools benefit from Title I directly or indirectly.

One of the major themes in ESSA is family and community engagement. Active family and community engagement includes a partnership of schools, parents, and communities working together to achieve the highest educational growth for their children. Such partnerships are essential if both families and schools are to serve our children and ensure our future. Parents and family community engagement form the critical link between the child and the school. Family and community engagement is an ongoing, changing, and developing process, which results in positive outcomes for all participants.

Title I, Part D – Subpart 2

The primary goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's (ESEA's) Title I, Part D Subpart 2 is to establish or improve programs of education for neglected, delinquent, or at-risk children and youth so that they have the opportunity to meet the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards.

Title II, Part A — Preparing, Training and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders

The purpose of Title II, Part A is to increase student academic achievement consistent with the challenging state academic standards; improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, administrators, and other school leaders; increase the number of teachers, administrators, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, administrators, and other school leaders.

Title III — Language Instruction for English Language Learners

Title III promotes high quality education for English Learners (ELs). The goal is to ensure that EL students, including immigrant children and youth, develop English proficiency and meet the same academic content and achievement standards required of all children.

Title IV, Part A - Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE)

The Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program is used to improve student academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, local educational agencies, schools, and local communities to: 1) provide all students with access to a well-

rounded education; 2) improve school conditions for student learning; and 3) improve the use of technology to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

Mississippi Compulsory School Law (Board Policy JBA)

The term “minor,” when used in any statute, shall include any person, male or female, under twenty-one years of age. MS Code 1-3-27

DeSoto County School District shall comply with the requirements of the “Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law” (MS Code 37-13-91). Appropriate reports as required by law shall be provided to the Mississippi Department of Education’s Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement.

“Compulsory-school-age child” means a child who has attained or will attain the age of six (6) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year and who has not attained the age of seventeen (17) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year; and shall include any child who has attained or will attain the age of five (5) years on or before September 1 and has enrolled in a full-day public school kindergarten program. A child, five (5) years of age, who enrolls in public kindergarten, will have to abide by the same guidelines as outlined in the §37-13-91.

Compulsory school-age children must be enrolled in school unless the child is:

- a. Physically, mentally, or emotionally incapable of attending school as determined by the appropriate school official based upon sufficient medical documentation;
- b. Enrolled in and pursuing a course of special education, remedial education or education for handicapped or physically or mentally disadvantaged children; or
- c. Being educated in a legitimate home instruction program. MS Code 37-13-91(3)

Reports

If a compulsory school-age child has not been enrolled in school within fifteen (15) calendar days after the first day of the school year or if a child has accumulated five (5) unlawful absences during the school year, the principal or his designee shall, within two (2) school days or within five (5) calendar days, whichever is less, report, on the form provided by the State Department of Education, the absences to the school attendance officer. The principal, or his designee, shall report any student suspensions or student expulsions to the school attendance officer when they occur. MS Code 37-13-91 (6)

School districts shall maintain accurate records documenting enrollment and attendance in a manner that allows the State Department of Education to make an assessment of changes in enrollment and attendance, including dropout rates.

The State Department of Education shall compile annually a statewide report on school district effectiveness in reducing absentee problems, dropout rates, and other attendance related problems during the previous school year, incorporate the information into the

annual Mississippi Report Card required by Section 37-3-53, Mississippi Code of 1972, on school district performance and offer technical assistance and coordination services to assist districts in improving performance.

Attendance/Excused Absences K-12 (Board Policy JBD)

Pursuant to Mississippi Code 37-13-91, a parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child in this state shall cause the child to enroll in and attend a public school or legitimate nonpublic for the period of time that the child is of compulsory-school-age. Mississippi Code Section 37-9-14(2)(u) states that School District Superintendents are “to comply in a timely manner with the compulsory education reporting requirements prescribed in Section 37-13-92(6).” The State Department of Education shall prescribe a uniform method for schools to utilize in reporting the unlawful absences to the school attendance officer.

The instructional day is therefore defined as a school day in which both teachers and pupils are in regular attendance for scheduled classroom instruction for not less than sixty-three percent (63%) of the required instructional time, as fixed by the local school board for each school in the school district. The school board will review and approve the instructional time for each school in the school district annually prior to the beginning of the school year.

Each of the following shall constitute an excused absence:

1. Illness or injury, which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school.
2. When isolation is ordered by the county health officer, the State Board of Health, or an appropriate school official.
3. Death or serious illness of a member of the immediate family, which includes grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, and stepsisters. The absences must be approved by the principal or his/her designee.
4. A medical or dental appointment documented with the proper excuse from the attending physician/dentist upon return to school.
5. Attendance at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
6. Observance of a religious event, with prior approval of the principal or his/her designee. (Approval should not be withheld unless, in the professional judgment of the principal or his/her designee, the extent of absence would adversely affect the student’s education.)
7. Attendance at an authorized school activity with the prior approval of the principal or his/her designee.
8. Participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel including vacations or other family travel, with prior approval of the principal or his/her designee.
9. An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the principal or his/her designee, that conditions are sufficient to warrant the child’s non-attendance. However, no absences shall be excused by the principal or his/her

designee when any student suspensions or expulsions circumvent the intent and spirit of the Compulsory Attendance Law.

Elementary School Students (K-5)

- Seven (7) absences may be excused by a note from the parent/guardian. **(The note must include the student's legal name, date of absence and reason for absence, parent/guardian signature, and the date the note was written.)**
- **Any** additional absence after the seven (7) excused by a parent/guardian note **must** be excused by a note from a doctor or other documentation excusing said absence.
- **Any** documentation being given for excuse of absence(s) **must** be submitted to the principal or his/her designee within two (2) school days of returning to school, unless granted an exception by the principal for extenuating circumstances.
- When a student has exceeded five (5) unexcused absences, the DeSoto County Attendance Officer shall be notified in writing within two (2) days by the school principal or his/her designee.

Make-up Work Policy:

When a student is absent from school (excused or unexcused), the number of days allowed to complete any required make-up work is commensurate with the number of days missed to a maximum of five (5) days. For example, if a student is absent from school for one (1) day, the student has one (1) day to complete the required make-up assignments. If the student is absent for five (5) days, he/she will have five (5) days to complete his/her make-up work. If the student is absent for twelve (12) days, the student has five (5) days to complete the missed work. The principal has the discretion to allow additional time or limit the number of required assignments in extreme situations.

School Attendance Officer

The Superintendent and principals shall cooperate with the school attendance officer employed by the State Department of Education, pursuant to MS Code 37-13-85.

Standard 10 of the MS Public School Accountability Standards is as follows:

The school district implements procedures for monitoring and reporting student absences as specified in the Mississippi Compulsory Attendance Law. MS Code 37-13-91

DeSoto County Schools Code of Discipline-Grades K-12 (Board Policy JD)

Forward

The Uniform Discipline Code has been developed in consultation with students, parents, teachers, and administrators so they will know and understand that firm, fair and consistent discipline policies are to be maintained in all DeSoto County public schools. Use of this Code is intended to ensure a stable learning environment in an atmosphere,

which encourages academic excellence. It is expected that staff members, students and parents will work together to support and enforce the code regulations with equity and consistency for all students.

A copy of this Code shall be distributed to each student and the parents, legal guardian or custodian of each such student shall sign a statement verifying that they have been given notice of the Code.

Introduction

The uniform Discipline Code of the DeSoto County Schools provides a uniform standard of conduct for all public school students. It describes inappropriate student behavior, ensures equal treatment for misconduct, and presets specific actions for remediating prohibited behaviors. The Code is based on the premise that rules must be enforced fairly, firmly and consistently and in a fashion equitable and just, while complying with state mandates and regulations. It recognizes that as students' progress in school and advance in age and maturity, they will assume greater responsibility for their actions. It is also recognized that differences in age and maturity require different types of disciplinary action.

In this Code, discipline is defined as the implementation of and adherence to behavioral rules and regulations, which will ensure an educational environment free of mental and physical hazards to students, teachers and staff. Such an environment is conducive to the practice of good citizenship and encourages learning. The enforcement of the Code will help ensure a safe and orderly school climate for students and staff alike.

Specific provisions of the Code include:

1. A parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory school-age child enrolled in the DeSoto County Schools shall be responsible financially for his or her minor child's destructive acts against school property or persons.
2. A parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory school-age child enrolled in the DeSoto County Schools may be requested to appear at school by the school attendance officer or the principal, for a conference regarding the destructive acts of their child, or any other discipline conference regarding the acts of the child.
3. Any parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory school-age child enrolled in the DeSoto County Schools who refuses or willfully fails to attend such discipline conference specified in paragraph (2) of this section may be summoned by proper notification by the superintendent of schools or the school attendance officer and be required to attend such discipline conference.
4. A parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory school-age child enrolled in the DeSoto County Schools shall be responsible for any criminal fines brought against such student for unlawful activity occurring on school grounds or buses.
5. Any parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory school age child who:
 - a. Fails to attend a discipline conference to which such parent, guardian or custodian has been summoned under the provisions of this section, or

- b. Refuses or willfully fails to perform any other duties imposed upon him or her under the law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction shall be fined not to exceed an amount provided by law.
6. The DeSoto County Schools shall be entitled to recover damages in an amount not to exceed an amount as provided by law, plus necessary court costs, from the parents of any minor (7-17) who maliciously and willfully damages or destroys property belonging to this school district. However, this section shall not apply to parents whose parental control of such child has been removed by court order or decree.
7. As an alternative to suspension, a student may remain in school by having the parent, guardian or custodian, with the consent of the student's teacher or teachers, attend class with the student for a period of time specifically agreed upon by the teacher and school principal. If the parent, guardian or custodian does not agree to attend class with the student, or fails to attend class with the student, the student shall be suspended in accordance with this Code.

Student Conduct:

Acts of Misconduct:

These acts of misconduct include those student behaviors, which disrupt the orderly educational process in the classroom or on the school grounds including the following:

Level I

- 1 – 1 Tardiness
- 1 – 2 Running and/or making excessive noise in the hall or building
- 1 – 3 Inappropriate personal contact including but not limited to pushing and shoving, inappropriate gestures and public displays of affection, recklessness, or any inappropriate contact which does not result in physical harm, or any additional contact which the principal determines to be in this level.
- 1 – 4 In unauthorized area without pass (halls, etc.)
- 1 – 5 Dress code violation
- * 1 – 6 Displaying any behavior which is disruptive to the orderly process of education

Disciplinary Action

First Violation

Minimum: Teacher-Student Conference

Maximum: Teacher-Student-Parent Conference

Repeated or Flagrant Violation

Minimum: Mandatory Student -Parent-Administrator Conference (Home Suspension)

Maximum: Corporal Punishment, in-school suspension, detention, and/or school suspension

*Students, who after having a teacher-student-parent conference, home suspension, Teacher Support Team interventions, continue displaying behavior, which is disruptive to the orderly process of education, can be suspended from school, pending a disciplinary hearing.

Level II

- *2-1 Leaving the school grounds without permission
- *2-2 Skipping class
- *2-3 Insubordination- refusal to follow written or verbal school rules after receiving specific directions from a person in authority including, but not limited to breaking school or classroom rules, failure to respond to staff request, refusal to complete assigned task, or exhibiting disrespect towards adults
- *2-4 Students shall not possess, smoke, or use tobacco or any product containing tobacco or nicotine while on campus, while attending school-sponsored activities, or while under the supervision and control of district employees. This includes the possession and/or use of any electronic device that delivers nicotine or other vaporized liquids to the person inhaling from the device, including but not limited to electronic cigarettes, vapes, vaporizers, cigars, pipes, hookahs, or any electronic device that delivers nicotine or other vaporized liquids to the person inhaling from the device.
- *2-5 Exhibiting any hostile physical or verbal actions
- ** 2-6 Unauthorized and/or inappropriate use of electronic devices (as defined in Board Policy IJBA).
- 2-7 Cheating on tests or exams (The grade "0" will be assigned regardless of other punishment.)

Disciplinary Action

First Violation

Minimum: Administrator-Conference, ALC, mandatory student-parent- administrator conference, corporal punishment

Maximum: School suspension (one to three days)

Repeated or Flagrant Violation

Minimum: School suspension (three days)

Maximum: School suspension (three days) and/or ALC for up to ten (10) days and/or Teacher Support Team interventions

* Students who, after having a student-teacher conference, a teacher-student-parent conference, a mandatory student-parent-administrator conference, and Teacher Support Team interventions, and a Functional Behavior Assessment, continue displaying behavior, which is disruptive to the orderly process of education, can be suspended from school, pending a disciplinary hearing.

* Additional disciplinary action for unauthorized and/or inappropriate use of personal electronic devices (as defined in Board Policy IJBA):

1st Offense: First offense will result in confiscation of the device with parental contact. The electronic device will be returned at the end of the school day to the student or his/her parent/guardian as determined by the building principal.

2nd Offense: Second offense will result in confiscation of the electronic device and a mandatory parent/administrator conference. The electronic device will not

be returned directly to the student; parent/guardian must meet with a school-level administrator to collect the electronic device.

3rd Offense: Third offense will be considered repeated and/or flagrant and the penalty for such acts will be determined by the building administrator. The electronic device will be confiscated, and penalties could include, but are not limited to the following:

- Check-in/Check-out procedures for the electronic device during the school day (1-10 days)
- ALC/In-school suspension (1-3 days)

4th Offense: Fourth offense will result in school suspension (1-3 days), and a loss of electronic device privileges pending reinstatement by the building principal.

Level III

3-1 Fighting

3-2 Gambling

*3-3 Theft or possession of stolen property

3-4 Acts which threaten the safety and well-being of students and/or staff: engaging in any behavior (by word or act) that encourages, incites, or instigates threatening or aggressive acts which can create the risk of harm to another person.

3-5 Extortion – use of intimidation, coercion or force

* 3-6 Vandalism of personal and/or school property

**3-7 Using profane, obscene, indecent, immoral, or offensive language and/or gestures, and/or possession of obscene, indecent, immoral or offensive materials

3-8 Inappropriate sexual conduct, including unwelcomed sexual contact, indecent exposure, or transferring sexually suggestive images through personal electronic devices

3-9 Bullying (as defined in Board Policy JDDA)

Disciplinary Action:

First Violation

Minimum: School suspension from one to three days, ALC, corporal punishment

Maximum: School suspension (three days) and report to authorities when applicable

Repeated or Flagrant Violation

Minimum: School suspension (three days), ALC (ten days), and/or Levels 3-4 and 3-8 Teacher Support Team interventions

Maximum: School suspension (three days) and possible assignment to DeSoto County Alternative Center pending the results of a disciplinary hearing.

*For theft or vandalism, restitution shall be made regardless of other punishment.

Level IV

- * 4-1 Possession use or under the influence of alcohol, synthetic drugs, counterfeit drugs, illegal drugs, narcotics, controlled substance(s) or paraphernalia.
- 4-2 Assault on a student. Assault is defined as purposely or recklessly causing or attempting to cause bodily injury (including pain or discomfort) to another.
- 4-3 Assault on a school employee. Assault is defined as purposely or recklessly causing or attempting to cause bodily injury (including pain or discomfort) to another.
- 4-4 Directing profanity, vulgar, or threatening language, and/or obscene gestures toward a staff member.

Any student in violation of the above shall be suspended by the principal for three days and ordered to appear for a disciplinary hearing before a District Hearing Officer.

Disciplinary Action

*Minimum: Assignment to the DeSoto County Alternative Center and a report will be made to the appropriate law enforcement authorities

Maximum: Expulsion

Students below grade 6 may be given other punishment.

Level V

- * 5-1 Possession and/or use of a weapon as defined in MS Code 97-37-17 – Weapons possession on educational property. The definition of weapon for the sake of this policy also includes any instrument used as a weapon to be reasonably mistaken as authentic. Examples of weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, rifles, pistols, toy guns, knives, toy knives, craft knives, utility tools, scissors, air or gas operated weapons, Airsoft pistols, BB guns, air rifle, air pistol, daggers, slingshots, razors, dynamite cartridges, bombs, grenades, mines, etc.

Disciplinary Action

Minimum: Possession other than gun will result in assignment to the DeSoto County Alternative Center and a report will be made to the appropriate law enforcement authorities

Maximum: Possession of a fire arm/gun or use of other weapon will result in expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year (under certain circumstances expulsion can be from the student's assigned school to the DeSoto County Alternative Center)

For students below grade 6, the hearing officer may recommend other punishment if the behavior does not require expulsion and the student is likely to benefit from remediation

5-2 Sale or distribution, or conspiring to sell counterfeit drugs, synthetic drugs, illegal drugs/alcohol, narcotics or controlled substance(s)

Disciplinary Action

Minimum: Assignment to the DeSoto County Alternative Center and a report will be made to the appropriate law enforcement authorities

Maximum: Expulsion

For students below grade 6, the hearing officer may recommend other punishment if the behavior does not require expulsion and the student is likely to benefit from remediation

5-3 Students are prohibited from wearing, displaying, or possessing in any manner on school property or at school-sponsored events clothing, apparel, accessories, drawings, or messages associated with any gang or social club that is associated with criminal activity, as defined by law enforcement agencies.

Disciplinary Action

Minimum: Mandatory student/parent/resource officer/administrator meeting to investigate situation and determine proper discipline consequence

Repeated: Assignment to the DeSoto County Alternative Center

Maximum: Expulsion for repeated violations and/or gang activity that includes but is not limited to:

- Acts which disrupt the process of orderly education
- Recruitment with use of intimidation
- Tagging or marking
- Assault
- Battery

For students below grade 6, the hearing officer may recommend other punishment if the behavior does not require expulsion and the student is likely to benefit from remediation.

5-4 Threats of violence or harm: Any spoken, written, gestured or electronically communicated threat that disrupts the educational environment of the school and/or suggests a student intends to cause bodily harm or carry out an act of violence against district property, students, employees, or others (e.g. bomb threats, school shooting threats, etc....)

Disciplinary Action

Students found to have made threats of violence or harm against district property, students, employees or others will be subject to expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year (under certain circumstances expulsion can be from the student's assigned school to the DeSoto County Alternative Center.)

In addition to these penalties, provisions of the Mississippi Criminal Code are applicable to illegal behavior. Principals are required to report illegal activities to the police.

Students committing any crime or involved with any criminal behavior are subject to arrest by local law enforcement.

The DeSoto County Board of Education permits individual schools to adopt additional regulations governing actions not covered by Conduct Code. However, such additional regulations may neither substitute for nor negate any of the provisions, in spirit or intent of the Conduct Code, and **must be approved in writing by the School Superintendent.**

Due Process

In cases where the imposition of punishment is for a suspension of three (3) days or less, the student will be orally informed of the charges lodged against him. The student shall have a right to respond and refute these charges. There may be a delay between the time that "notice" is given and the time of the parent/student right to respond. A parent will be notified of the suspension by telephone, if possible, and in writing. The student's parent/guardian has a right to discuss this matter further and have the charge and punishment explained by the administration along with all other rights provided by board policy.

Disciplinary Hearing

When a student appears before a disciplinary hearing, the student will be subject to additional punishment up to and including suspension of more than three (3) days, assignment to an alternative educational setting for more than ten (10) days, or an expulsion from school.

For additional information on due process and disciplinary hearings, please refer to Board Policy JDAAA – Disciplinary Procedures

Alternative Placement Procedures

After a student is referred for consideration of placement at DeSoto County Alternative Center (DCAC), the District Review Board and Transition Team will determine appropriate placement for the student. Once a student is accepted into DCAC, the District Review Board and Transition Team will develop an Individualized Instruction Plan (IIP) for each student. The plan will follow the program and class schedule of the home school. DCAC follows the frameworks that are established by the state of Mississippi for the

subject matter to be taught in each course. Certified personnel will send a daily feedback sheet home that requires a parent signature for all students attending DCAC.

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) committee meets to determine every change of placement for our special education students. Students with special education rulings follow their IEP while at DCAC.

Parents are notified of the recommendation for placement at DCAC during the disciplinary hearing. The home school will contact the parent once acceptance is granted by the District Review Board. All parents and students will meet with a DCAC administrator to discuss the DCAC program and requirements. The student shall complete a minimum of thirty (30) successful days prior to returning to his/her home school.

The District Review Board consists of school-level administrators, district-level administrators, and counselors as determined by the Director of Pupil Services.

Gang Policy (Board Policy JCBB)

The DeSoto County School District prohibits gang activity, defined hereinafter. Students who engage in gang activity will be subject to discipline pursuant to the District's Code of Discipline, up to and including possible expulsion.

A "gang" is defined as a group that initiates, advocates, or promotes illegal activities, activities that threaten the safety or well-being of persons or property on school grounds, or at supervised school functions, or activities that are harmful to the education process.

Prohibited "gang activity" includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Soliciting students to become gang members;
- (2) Participating in gang initiation or other gang ceremonies;
- (3) Deliberately wearing, displaying or possessing prohibited gang symbols;
- (4) Engaging in gang-related violence or threats of violence;
- (5) Threatening others, including threats by brandishing a weapon or replica of a weapon on school campuses, or at supervised school functions; or
- (6) Engaging in any behavior undertaken in such a manner as to be reasonably likely to incite violence or endanger persons or property

Prohibited "gang symbols" may include any type of clothing decoration, jewelry, patches, bandanas, gang names, depiction of gang signs or symbols, and/or body signal/movement which is recognized as denoting a gang or is a sign, signal or movement utilized in connection with gang communications, including, but not limited to those appearing with the "Gang Awareness" pamphlet attached hereto as well as the additions thereto in the future. School officials will keep a booklet containing known "gang symbols" in each school office. In addition, prohibited

“gang symbols” shall be published at the start of each school year in the Student Handbook. Students and parents who may have questions regarding this policy should contact the school principal for further clarification of any part of the policy.

Students may be disciplined for engaging in any activity prohibited by this policy including the prohibited “gang activity” enumerated in the third paragraph hereof. District officials will cooperate with local law enforcement to provide the school with gang information to aid in the prevention of violence, gangs, and drugs in our schools. This information shall include, but is not limited to: gang names, colors, symbols, signals, and gestures associated with gangs (all of which are prohibited gang activity). Amendments and updates to the list of prohibited gang symbols and gang activity and/or handbook must be submitted to the Director of Pupil Services for approval. Thereafter, the Director of Pupil Services will distribute the amended and/or updated information to the appropriate district officials.

Each school shall make regular announcements to the student body advising that gang activity and gang symbols are strictly prohibited.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, nothing herein prohibits the display of recognized religious symbols such as the Star of David or the Crescent or the Cross unless these or other religious symbols are altered or augmented in some way.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, wearing of clothing or particular colors in and of itself is not prohibited unless the clothing (color or otherwise) is worn in combination with other prohibited gang signs or symbols. The wearing or displaying in any manner of gang names, however, is prohibited.

DeSoto County Schools Bus Guidelines (Board Policy JCDAD)

Find your Bus Online

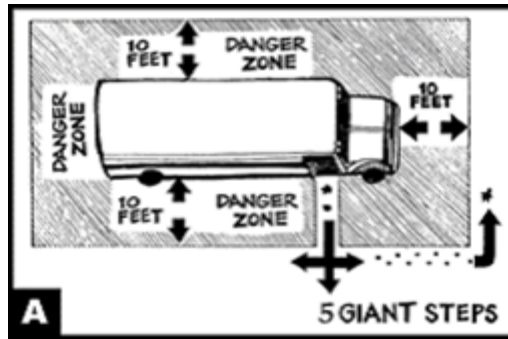
www.desotocountyschools.org

Students may be picked up in the morning temporarily without a pass, but a bus pass with the minimum required information will be required before boarding in the afternoon.

THE BUS WILL NOT DELIVER TO DAYCARES OR SITTERS.

Safely Loading and Unloading a School Bus

The most dangerous time for bus riders is during the loading and unloading process. Nationally, student fatalities in the danger zone around the bus (A) nearly triple the number from actual bus crashes.



Teach Your Child

- When getting on the bus, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver’s signal. Board the bus one at a time.
- Look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus.
- Before crossing the street, take five “giant steps” out from the front of the bus, or until driver’s face can be seen (A).

Wait for the driver to signal that it’s safe to cross.

- Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped.
- Keep watching traffic when crossing.

Safety Steps You Can Take

- Supervise children. Get to the bus stop on time. Wait away from the road and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he/she drops something near the bus.
- Have your child use a backpack or book bag to keep loose items together.
- Ensure clothing and backpacks have no loose drawstrings or straps that may get caught.
- Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading.
- If you think a bus stop is in an unusually dangerous place, talk with the transportation department (662-349-4210).

Set the Example

- Vehicles must stop when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm (B). Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.



Bus Rules

Be waiting at your stop 5 minutes early. (This does NOT mean inside your house or car.)

If you need to cross the street, wait for traffic to stop; driver will motion to you when it is safe to pass in front of the bus to load or unload.

OBEY THE BUS DRIVER!!

- **No unauthorized items on bus.** (No weapons, tobacco, combustibles, pets, large items, etc.)
- **No use of electronic devices.**
- **Be nice and courteous.**
- **Keep the bus clean.**
- **No profanity and NO FIGHTING.**
- **Keep hands and head inside of bus.**
- **Do not throw anything, anywhere.**
- **Stay in your seat. Driver may assign seats.**
- **No eating or drinking.** (Students may drink water.)
- **Damage to bus interior may result in student paying for the damage.**
- **Emergency door/windows may only be opened in case of emergency.**
- **Do not distract the driver through loud talking or misbehavior.**
- **Report any problems you may have to the driver as soon as possible.**
- **DCS and drivers are not responsible for articles left on the bus.**

NOTICE: Use or possession of gang graffiti, gang drawings, gang writings, gang dress or gang activity of any kind may result in expulsion from school.

VIOLATIONS WILL BE REPORTED TO YOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL.

Punishment may include removing you from the bus permanently.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS WILL DETERMINE ANY PUNISHMENTS.

MS Code 37-41-3 **Pupils Entitled to Transportation;** Pupils of legal school age, which shall include kindergarten pupils, and in actual attendance in the public schools who live a distance of one (1) mile or more by the nearest traveled road from the school to which they are assigned.

Students not at their assigned stops in the morning or that have not properly boarded the bus on time at the school in the afternoon will be left.

A driver may only allow students to unload at their assigned stop unless prior arrangements are made and approved by a school principal or administrator. A request must be communicated in writing by the parent(s) of the student(s) involved, approved in writing, and communicated clearly to the bus driver by the school.

Students may not have friends ride the bus home with them.

DeSoto County Schools only transports students to his/her primary residence. Upon enrollment, each parent/guardian is required to establish a primary residence based on the requirements for school admission listed in School Board Policy JBC. DeSoto County Schools does not provide busing to daycares, family daycare homes, or the homes of friends or extended family members.

Visitors (Board Policy KM)

Visitors with legitimate reasons for coming to the school are welcome in any of the Desoto County District Schools:

The following regulations shall be observed during the visitation:

- All visitors must report to the office (including news media).
- If the principal has any reason to question the legitimacy of the visit, the superintendent's office shall be consulted.
- Teachers shall not be interrupted while teaching except for emergencies.
- Pupils from other schools and pre-school children are not allowed unless specifically invited and pre-arranged through the principal's office.
- News media must be granted permission by Community relations before they enter a school campus, or they will be considered trespassing and are subject to fines and/or arrest.

Tobacco-Free School Property (Board Policy EBAB)

The DeSoto County Board of Education bans the use of all tobacco products in all school buildings and property in the district and in all school vehicles by all persons at all times. Tobacco products are defined as any substance that contains tobacco, including but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or electronic cigarettes.

This ban extends to all employees, students, and patrons attending school-sponsored athletic events and meetings and school-owned or operated vehicles and facilities. The Board issues this ban in a sincere appeal to all employees, students, and patrons to cooperate in helping create within our facilities a truly healthy environment for all concerned.

The Federal Code states that neither a person nor a federal agency shall permit smoking within any indoor facility owned, leased, or contracted for and utilized by such person or agency for provision of routine or regular kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education or library services to children.

Any failure to comply with a prohibition in this section shall be in violation of this section and any person subject to such prohibition who commits such violation may be liable to the United States for a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for each violation, or may be subject to an administrative compliance order, or both. Each day a violation continues shall constitute a separate violation. In the case of any civil penalty under this section, the total amount shall not exceed the amount of Federal funds received by such person for the fiscal year in which the continuing violations occurred. REF: Public Law 103-227, 20 US CODE 6083 Section 1043(a) and (c-1) and (f-1).

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are encouraged for the success of your child. To arrange a conference with your child's teacher, counselor, or principal, please phone or email the school for an appointment. Conferences help both the home and school provide learning in terms of student maturity, ability, and achievement.

Medications

Administration of medication is foremost the responsibility of the parent. The only medications that will be administered during the school day are those that are specifically ordered during that time. For safety reasons, schools are not responsible for keeping extra supplies of medication to give in case a dose is not given at home. The medication must either be given at home all the time or at school all the time.

A responsible adult must bring prescription medications to the school. Medication will be counted and receipted with a school staff member. Prescription medication will only be accepted if it is in a pharmacy dispensed medication bottle with a current medication label that contains the student's name, name of the medication, how often it is to be given, the dosage, and the date of expiration. A completed medication authorization form, signed by the parent/guardian, is also required. These forms can be found online at www.desotocountyschools.org or your school website under "Required Forms".

It is at the principal's discretion if over-the-counter medications will be given at school. If over-the-counter medications are allowed, they must be in the original bottle and/or package with the dosing instructions on it. A completed medication authorization form signed by the parent/guardian and Healthcare Provider is required.

For questions regarding medication administration, asthma medication, epi-pens, or diabetic medications, please refer to Board policies JGCDC, JGCDA, and JGCDE.

School Meals

The DeSoto County School Board has adopted a Wellness Policy to encourage healthful eating and physical activity as a valuable part of daily life. We encourage all parents to apply for meal benefits. Meal applications can be completed online at www.school lunchapp.com. Meals are served each school

day. Parents can place money on the student account at www.mypaymentsplus.com. This service can be used to post payments, view account balances, and receive email notification when balances are low.

Menus can be found on the website at www.desotocountycn.org. Menus meet all state and federal guidelines under the United States Department of Agriculture.

Asbestos Management Plans

The DeSoto County School District has Asbestos management plans for each school in accordance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act. The management plan can be reviewed in the main office of the school. Any questions may be directed to DeSoto County Board of Education, Steve Moore at 662-449-7262.

Inclement Weather

DeSoto County Schools will make an official announcement regarding closures/delays on the district website, www.desotocountyschools.org, on Memphis-area television stations, and through the school district's parent notification system. Even though social media may be used to announce closures and/or delays, these are not official announcements. There is often misinformation that is communicated via social media, and we ask that our stakeholders only trust the three official sources (the district website, Memphis-area television stations, and the district notification system). Days missed due to inclement weather will be rescheduled. State law requires school to be in session for 180 days.

Emergency Management

Dear Parents,

We are prepared to respond should an emergency or crisis arise while school is in session. Our first priority is to protect the students and staff from harm. Each school has a detailed plan. Staff members are assigned specific tasks in the event of fire, tornado, earthquake, hazardous materials, physical threats and more. Parents should have a basic understanding of our plans and procedures; however, some sensitive details may not be published.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities in Emergency Preparation and Response

Parents and legal guardians of students are responsible for ensuring that current emergency contact information is provided to the school. **Students are ONLY allowed to be released to persons *designated in writing* at such time designated by school administration.**

In addition to school personnel, the parents and guardians are also responsible for informing their children about how to respond in case of an emergency, disaster, or event. Specifically, parents should instruct their children regarding the importance of complying

with the direction of school personnel and emergency responders. *(It is critical that students do not have directions from parents/guardians that are contrary to the district's stated policy or contrary to directions from school personnel on the scene of an incident. Compliance and cooperation are essential.)*

School authorities will do everything possible to care for each student while he/she is under district supervision. An emergency, lockdown, building evacuation or some combination of all three may occur during school hours.

Please remember these simple “Dos and Don’ts.”

Do

Do keep your contact information updated. *In the event of a serious incident the school and district will make every effort to openly communicate the releasable information to all parents by multiple means (phone, e-mail, text, news media, etc.).*

Do keep your child’s medical, medication and allergy information updated.

Do familiarize yourself with school emergency procedures and required drills. *The DCS Safety Plan is available (www.desotocountyschools.org), updated annually, and includes countywide crisis response procedures. Each school is assessed annually and also updates a site-specific addendum each year.*

Do tune to news media for emergency instructions.

Do check the DCS or school web pages for updates.

Do sign up for “Notify Me” automated emails or texts. *Follow us on twitter or like us on Facebook.*

Do follow emergency instructions carefully. *Lockdowns and evacuations may require changes and delays in student checkout and pick-up procedures.*

Do expect to provide proper identification if picking up your child. *Students may or may not be available for immediate pick-up. Times and locations of parent pick-up may change.*

Do remain calm and patient. *Caring for any injured and protecting students and staff will be the district’s first priority; then contacting parents/guardians of any hurt individuals. Therefore, some mass communications may be delayed.*

Don’t

Don’t assume the worst. *School lockdowns can be sounded for many reasons, such as precautionary measures while rumors are being checked out, or for the duration of a police action in the neighborhood totally unrelated to the school operations.*

Don't drive to the school unless you're directed to do so. *Anyone arriving on campus during a crisis should expect traffic patterns and parking to be different.*

Don't call the school immediately. *During a building evacuation phones are unattended, and during other events the school phone lines and staff can be overwhelmed with parent calls. Phone lines need to be cleared in order to deal with the situation.*

Don't call/text your child. *Exchanging incomplete, incorrect information or intentionally restricted and sensitive information can make a situation worse.*

Don't wait until there is a crisis to get involved. *PTA/PTOs and Booster Clubs are great ways to get plugged in early and stay in the loop all year at your child's school.*

DeSoto County Schools Dress Code (Board Policy JCDB)

Proper attire and grooming are deemed important to scholastic achievement and orderliness. The responsibility for the appearance of the students begins with the parents and the students themselves. Students' clothing, make-up, and hairstyles should reflect neatness, cleanliness, and self-respect so that the school is a desirable place in which to promote learning and character development.

It is virtually impossible to formulate a set of regulations that adequately covers every detail of proper grooming. Violations of the Dress Code will be dealt with in accordance with the DeSoto County Schools Code of Discipline. It will be treated as insubordination and will be handled as stated in the Code of Discipline of the DeSoto County Schools. Insubordination is a Level II violation.

First Violation: Administrator-Parent conference, home suspension, ALC or in-school suspension

Second Violation: School suspension (three days)

Repeated Times: Suspension from school pending a disciplinary hearing

1. Hair must be neat, clean and worn in a manner that does not interfere with vision or cause a disruption in the classroom. No combs, picks, rollers or extreme coloring will be allowed.
2. T-shirts with sleeves, white or colored, are acceptable. Shirts must be properly closed, zipped or buttoned.
3. No article of clothing that pertains to or depicts the following will be acceptable:
 - a. Substances or activities illegal by law for minors, such as, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling
 - b. Profane, suggestive or violent language
 - c. Derogatory symbols; remarks directed to any ethnic group
4. Sufficient underclothes must be worn appropriately and must not be exposed.

5. Tank tops, tube tops, muscle shirts, spaghetti straps, thin straps, or tops that expose the midriff, any part of the bust, excessive part of the back, are excessively tight or are distracting in class are not permitted. No slits in shirts are to be above the waistline of pants or skirts. Shirts are to be tucked in. Blouses/tops made to be worn outside should be at least three (3) inches below the waistline and no longer than five (5) inches below the waistline.
6. Students in grades K thru 5 are allowed to wear shorts as part of their daily attire. Shorts should be walking shorts or Bermuda shorts. Students in grades 6 thru 12 may wear walking shorts or Bermuda shorts that are knee length. They should not be excessively tight or baggy. Athletic shorts are not permitted unless they are a part of an approved gym class or athletic class/activity.
7. Knee length dresses and skirts are allowed. No slits in these skirts or dresses above the knee caps are allowed.
8. No spandex articles of clothing are allowed.
9. Shoes must be worn at all times, and no house shoes are allowed. Shoes with laces should be laced and tied.
10. No visible tattoos will be allowed. Neither male nor female students will be permitted to wear rings and/or studs in their noses, tongues, or any exposed body parts other than the ear and appropriate rings on fingers.
11. Coaches, physical education classes or any organized athletics have the option to ban all jewelry due to safety reasons and/or violation of the Mississippi High School Activity Association regulations.
12. Sunglasses, other than prescription, must be removed when inside the building.
13. All pants must be worn fitted to the waist, at the waist, with or without a belt. Belts must be worn and buckled appropriately for pants that have belt loops. Pants should fit appropriately. No baggy pants are allowed. No writing is to be on the seat of the pants, even the cheerleaders' uniform and dance team.
14. Leggings are allowed when worn with a top that meets the dress length guidelines specified in #7.
15. Pants must have no exposed skin above the knee.
16. Hats, caps, sweatbands, or other head coverings are not to be worn in the buildings or on the grounds of the school except for medical reasons as prescribed by a physician. Head coverings as part of a religious belief will be allowed if there is sufficient proof the student is a practicing member of the religious sect. Head coverings may be worn if authorized by the faculty and/or administration, if it is part of a uniform (i.e., wearing a full baseball uniform during games or practice) or as deemed necessary.
17. Specific outfits designated for extracurricular activities and decisions concerning any questionable clothing will be left to the discretion of the principal.
18. Local principals or their designee have the power and discretion to make all decisions on their campus.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible Students") certain rights with respect to the student's educational records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's educational records within 45 days of the day the District receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal or appropriate school official, a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request an amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible students may ask the DeSoto County School District to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading by submitting a request in writing to the school principal, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the District decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the District will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the District as an administrator, supervisor, instructor or support staff member including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel; a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the District has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request to officials of another school District in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, the District discloses educational records without consent.

The District may disclose Directory Information regarding its students. Directory information means information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy, if disclosed. It includes, but is not limited to the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, date of attendance, awards,

photograph, videotape not used in a disciplinary matter, student work for display at the discretion of the teacher and/or the most recent educational agency or institution attended.

The parent or eligible student has the right to refuse to let the District designate any or all types of information about the student as directory information by notifying the principal of the school no later than fourteen (14) days after the student's enrollment or receipt of this notice, whichever is later.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-460

Anti-Harassment Policy (JCBC)

Students in the DeSoto County School District are to be protected from sexual harassment. This protection includes any combination of relationships including student to student, staff member or teacher to student or harassment from any adult or other student. It is the intent of the DeSoto County Board of Education to maintain an environment free from sexual harassment of any kind. Therefore, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature amounting to or constituting harassment are prohibited.

The DeSoto County School District also affirms the concept of employee protection and therefore shall not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any employee, male or female, which harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another's work performance or which creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

Further, the DeSoto County School District prohibits sexual harassment of or by any student. This policy applies to conduct during and relating to school and school-sponsored activities. Sexual harassment is inappropriate behavior and is offensive. Any student who engages in the sexual harassment of anyone in the school setting may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion. Any employee of the DeSoto County School District who has any inappropriate sexual behavior will not only be subject to punitive measures up to and including termination, but also subject to prosecution in accordance with Mississippi Codes § 97-5-24 (1994) and § 97-29-3 (1980).

Digital Learning Initiative for Grades K-5

In Kindergarten and 1st Grade, students will be issued iPads. In 2nd- 5th Grades, students will be assigned a laptop device of their own for use during the school day. This is different than the normal elementary procedures of using a computer periodically in a lab. The students' computers will actually be in their classrooms. The goal is to introduce and teach students how to use and care for the devices throughout the elementary years, so they will be prepared to transition to the "at home" responsibilities during their secondary years.

For more information, please visit the Digital Learning Initiative tab on the DeSoto County Schools website.

Equipment/Internet Responsibility Statement (IJB)

DeSoto County School District is pleased to offer students access to computer usage to enhance academic development and skills in using media that are commonly found in all aspects of our daily lives. DeSoto County Schools (DCS) is CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act) and COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) compliant. Recognizing that no filtering solution can be 100% effective, it is understood that all technology protection measures do not and will not work perfectly. In complying with CIPA, DCS is expected to engage in a "good faith effort" to abide by the requirements of CIPA/FERPA. CIPA/FERPA does not create a private right to action, meaning that the discovery of objectionable material on a computer cannot result in a lawsuit complaining that a school violated CIPA/FERPA.

DCS Non-discriminatory Policy

The DeSoto County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Compliance Coordinator
DeSoto County Schools
5 East South Street
Hernando, MS 38632
662-429-5271

Compliance Coordinator
Title IX Coordinator
DeSoto County Schools
5 East South Street
Hernando, MS 38632
662-429-5271

The Compliance Coordinator has been designated to address all inquiries regarding the following Federal polices:

Title VI – race, color, ethnicity, and national origin

Title IX – sex and pregnancy

Title II

Age Discrimination Act

Boy Scouts

After initial investigation, all inquiries shall be directed to the appropriate person(s). A thorough investigation shall be conducted in accordance with DeSoto County School Board Policy GAF: Complaints, Grievances and Harassment.

City of Southaven Ordinance

Please be advised of the City of Southaven Ordinance, City Code 10-8. This ordinance states: If a parent/guardian gives false statements about his/her residence to a government official to enroll children in a Southaven public school, the parent/guardian can be fined up to \$1,000 and/or jailed for a period of not more than six (6) months or both. In addition, restitution shall be made to the City of Southaven for all man-hours exhausted and expenses occurred due to such false statements or misrepresentations.

The schools covered by this ordinance are all schools within the city limits of Southaven. They are: Southaven Elementary, Greenbrook Elementary, Hope Sullivan Elementary, Southaven Intermediate School, Southaven Middle School, Southaven High School, DeSoto Central Primary, DeSoto Central Elementary, DeSoto Central Middle School, and DeSoto Central High School. Please be aware that this ordinance includes families who live out of the city limits of Southaven, but are assigned to any of the above-named schools.

In addition to parents who falsify information, this ordinance is also directed at DeSoto County residents who knowingly allow their address to be used by families who live out of the district. This practice contributes to the burden local taxpayers are paying, in addition to the cost of constructing new facilities to accommodate our growing number of students.

DeSoto County Elementary and Intermediate Schools

Center Hill Elementary 13662 Center Hill Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	890-7705 (Grades K-5) Principal – Kristy Hale http://che.desotocountyschools.org
Chickasaw Elementary School 6391 Chickasaw Drive Olive Branch, MS 38654	895-6664 (Grades 2-3) Principal - Selina Nichols http://ces.desotocountyschools.org
DeSoto Central Primary School 3210 Getwell Road Southaven, MS 38672	912-1300 (Grades K-2) Principal – Leighanne Wamble http://dcps.desotocountyschools.org
DeSoto Central Elementary 2411 Central Parkway Southaven, MS 38672	349-6234 (Grades 3-5) Principal – Lisa Duke http://dce.desotocountyschools.org
Greenbrook Elementary School 730 Rasco Road Southaven, MS 38671	342-2330 (Grades K-2) Principal – Amy Cobb http://ges.desotocountyschools.org
Hernando Elementary School 455 Riley Street Hernando, MS 38632	429-4160 (Grades K-1) Principal - Renee Triplett http://hes.desotocountyschools.org
Hernando Hills Elementary School 570 McIngvale Road Hernando, MS 38632	429-9117 (Grades 2-3) Principal – Wendy Michael http://hhe.desotocountyschools.org
Hope Sullivan Elementary School 7985 Southaven Circle West Southaven, MS 38671	393-2919 (Grades K-2) Principal – Kenneth McKinney http://hse.desotocountyschools.org
Horn Lake Elementary School 6341 Ridgewood Drive Horn Lake, MS 38637	393-4608 (Grades K-2) Principal – Carrie Speck http://hle.desotocountyschools.org
Horn Lake Intermediate School 6585 Horn Lake Road Horn Lake, MS 38637	280-7075 (Grades 3-5) Principal – Dr. Crystal Robinson http://hli.desotocountyschools.org
Lake Cormorant Elementary School 3285 Wilson Mill Rd. West Lake Cormorant, MS 38641	781-1135 (Grades K-5) Principal – Nathan Hickerson http://lce.desotocountyschools.org
Lewisburg Elementary School 1717 Craft Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	895-8750 (Grades 2-3) Principal – Cynthia Dixon http://les.desotocountyschools.org
Lewisburg Intermediate School 1711 Craft Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	892-6180 (Grades 4-5) Principal – Michelle Corbin http://lis.desotocountyschools.org

Lewisburg Primary School 1707 Craft Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	893-6001 (Grades K-1) Principal – Kim Bridges http://lps.desotocountyschools.org/
Oak Grove Central Elementary 893 Oak Grove Road Hernando, MS 38632	429-4180 (Grades 4-5) Principal – Stacey Pirtle http://oge.desotocountyschools.org
Olive Branch Elementary School 9549 East Pigeon Roost Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	895-2256 (Grades K-1) Principal – Christy Upchurch http://obe.desotocountyschools.org
Olive Branch Intermediate School 8631 Pigeon Roost Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	893-1221 (Grades 4-5) Principal – Ashley Taggart http://obi.desotocountyschools.org
Overpark Elementary School 8530 Forest Hill Irene Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	890-8745 (Grades K-5) Principal – Helen Wright http://oes.desotocountyschools.org
Pleasant Hill Elementary School 7686 Pleasant Hill Road Olive Branch, MS 38654	890-9654 (Grades K-5) Principal – Bettye Magee http://phe.desotocountyschools.org
Shadow Oaks Elementary School 3780 Shadow Oaks Parkway Horn Lake, MS 38637	393-4585 (Grades K-2) Principal – Michaela Granger http://soe.desotocountyschools.org
Southaven Elementary School 8274 Claiborne Street Southaven, MS 38671	342-2289 (Grades K-5) Principal – Andrew Edwards http://ses.desotocountyschools.org
Southaven Intermediate School 175 Rasco Rd. West Southaven, MS 38671	253-0123 (Grades 3-5) Principal – April Rucker http://sis.desotocountyschools.org
Walls Elementary School 6131 Delta View Road Walls, MS 38680	781-1280 (Grades K-5) Principal – Erica Armstrong http://wes.desotocountyschools.org

**DeSoto County Schools
2023-2024 School Calendar**

August 1, 2023	Teachers' First Day
August 3, 2023	Students' First Day
September 4, 2023	Labor Day Holiday
October 9, 2023	Fall Break
November 20-24, 2023	Thanksgiving Holidays
December 15, 2023	End First Semester
December 18, 2023- January 1, 2024	Christmas Holidays
January 2 & 3, 2024	Professional Development Days
January 4, 2024	Students' Return
January 15, 2024	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
February 16, 2024	Professional Development Day
February 19, 2024	President's Day Holiday
March 11-15, 2024	Spring Break
March 29, 2024	Good Friday Holiday
April 1, 2024	Easter Break
May 22, 2024	Students' Last Day
May 24, 2024	Teachers' Last Day

Tentative Make-up Days: February 16, February 19, April 1, May 23