

David Mindess School
2021-2022
Parent Student Handbook



Ashland Clockers

Setting New Standards of Academic Excellence

David Mindess School

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Claudia Bennett

Principal

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James Adams

Superintendent

School Committee

Laurie Tosti - Chair

Marc Terry - Vice-Chair

Tina Fitanides - Secretary

Erin Williams - Member

Paul Kendall - Member

The information in this handbook is current as of August 2021 publication. Ashland Public Schools reviews and revises its policies and curriculum on a regular basis to meet local and state guidelines.

Dear Mindess Elementary School Community,

Welcome to the David Mindess Elementary School! We are excited to begin the 2021 - 2022 school year.

This is year two of the K-5 implementation of our new Lucy Calkins literacy program. Over the past two years and throughout this year, our teaching staff will be participating in professional development opportunities as we continue implementation. We are excited to be bringing this program to our students with the goal of helping them gain the skills necessary to become successful readers and writers in the 21st century.

Last winter our community voted overwhelmingly to build a new Mindess School behind the existing building. Later this fall, we will break ground. It is an exciting time as we look forward to opening our new building in the fall of 2023.

We continue to enjoy a strong relationship with our families and our extended community. We recognize that our community is becoming increasingly diverse. We are committed to learning from one another, to better understand one another, and to celebrate our diversity. We will continue to explore ways to be more reflective of our community as we further strengthen our relationship with our community.

This handbook has been developed to acquaint you with the procedures, policies, and features of the Mindess School. We hope you will find this information useful and keep this handbook as a quick reference throughout the year.

For additional helpful information, please see the Ashland Public Schools website at <http://www.ashland.k12.ma.us>. We invite you to communicate with us and help us as we work toward providing the highest quality educational program possible for all students.

Welcome to the Mindess School!

Claudia M. Bennett
Principal

Mindess Students



Reach for the STARS

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ASHLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Vision Statement:

The Ashland Public Schools is a forward thinking district that cultivates the academic and social-emotional growth of each student through a supportive, collaborative, innovative and challenging environment. Students will develop into self-motivated, resilient, life-long learners, who embrace their role as responsible contributors to a global community.

Mission Statement:

- We will recruit and retain highly skilled practitioners (teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, custodial staff, Nutrition service, administration and secretaries)
- We will consistently use student data/assessments to improve student achievement
- We will design and implement a targeted professional development plan for all stakeholders
- We will engage stakeholders (parents/students/teachers/community members)
- We will maintain a strong focus on a quality curriculum

Theory of Action:

If we provide a safe learning environment, develop, coordinate and implement a rigorous curriculum through quality instruction, and create an environment where educational innovation and best practices are valued, practiced and evaluated, then our students will be prepared for college or career readiness.

Organizational Values:

~ The Ashland Public Schools lives by the following values:

Pride – We will be passionate champions for the Ashland Public Schools.

Integrity – We will be sincere in our adherence to ethical principles and do what is in the best interest of all we serve.

Respect – We will demonstrate an appreciation for the value of all. We will foster an environment that is safe and nurturing for students and staff.

Responsibility – We will take ownership for following through with our mission. We will expect staff, parents, students and community members to be accountable for their contribution to the educational process.

Achievement – We will continually improve.

Communication – We will seek the input of all our stakeholders; sharing information openly and honestly and expect the same of all stakeholders.

ACADEMICS:

Ashland's Educational Principles

1. All students can learn.
2. All students learn in different ways at different rates.
3. All students deserve and need positive support and respect.
4. Students learn best as active participants in the process and should be encouraged to take risks.
5. Learning occurs best in a safe, nurturing, and challenging environment.
6. The school community values differences and appreciates diversity.
7. The school community fosters honesty, integrity, and a strong sense of ethics.
8. The commitment to education is a shared community responsibility.

Curriculum

The state of Massachusetts has adopted the [Common Core State Standards](#). For specific information regarding implementation in Massachusetts follow this link: [Massachusetts Common Core Standards](#). Additionally, in the Ashland Public Schools the focus of the curriculum is not only upon the acquisition of cognitive skills, but also upon the development of appropriate physical, social/emotional and behavioral skills. The specific kind of instruction provided varies according to grade level. Instruction in art, music, technology, and physical education is provided to all children in grades three, four and five on a weekly basis.

Homework

Recognizing the research indicating a positive correlation between increased time on homework and higher proficiency scores, the Ashland School Committee proposes the following homework policy. Homework in this instance refers to work assigned by a teacher to be completed *outside of class time*. This work is not limited to that which can be written.

It is our belief that homework serves many purposes:

- to improve academic performance
- to help student organize their time
- to extend learning and critical thinking beyond the school day
- to develop individual responsibility decision making skills and independence
- to provide additional time for the application of new skills
- to enhance grades

The suggested guidelines are as follows:

- Grade 3 an average of 30 minutes three times per week
- Grades 4-5 an average of 45 minutes three-four times per week

Students:

1. Record assignments daily.
2. Gather materials necessary for completion of the assignment.
3. Ask for clarification or help if the assignment is not understood.
4. Complete assignments on time.
5. Plan adequate time for long-term assignments.

Teachers:

1. Provide a thorough explanation of how to do an assignment.
2. Comment upon, grade, or acknowledge in some way each assignment.
3. Vary the types of assignments given.
4. Ensure that homework assignments are meaningful.
5. Coordinate the assignment of homework to avoid overload.
6. Provide ample time for long-term assignments throughout the school year.

7. Communicate homework requirements and the consequences for not completing homework to the students and the parents.

Parents:

1. Establish homework as a priority.
2. Communicate with the teacher if there is a question about homework.
3. Foster pride in completed tasks.
4. Provide a quiet place, time, and materials to complete assignments.
5. Encourage a consistent daily routine.
6. If the student says that assignments are completed, see that the time is devoted to reading, reviewing, or other academic pursuits.
7. Support the consequences when homework is not completed.

Progress Reports

Formal reporting of children's progress occurs three times a year and includes a first report card in autumn, a report card in March, and a final report card which is sent home with the student in June. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in conjunction with the first and second report card.

Parent Conferences

Although parent conferences are scheduled for specific days during the school year, teachers are encouraged to confer with parents on an ongoing basis as needed. If there are concerns regarding a child's academic progress, attitude, effort, or behavior, parents will be notified immediately. Telephone conferences are permissible and encouraged in those instances where it is difficult for the parent to come to the school during the day.

GENERAL INFORMATION**Translation of the Parent/Student Handbook**

Please call the main office at the school if you would like a copy of this document translated into a language other than English.

Por favor llame a la oficina principal en la escuela si desea una copia de este documento sea traducido a otro idioma que no sea Inglés.

Por favor, ligue para o escritório principal da escola, se você quiser uma cópia deste documento traduzido em uma língua diferente do Inglês.

يرجى الاتصال على المكتب الرئيسي في المدرسة إذا كنت تريد نسخة من هذه الوثيقة مترجمة إلى لغة غير اللغة الانكليزية.

Gelieve telefonisch contact op het hoofdkantoor op de school als u graag een kopie van dit document vertaald in een andere taal dan het Engels.

만일 당신이 그 문서의 사본을 영어가 아닌 다른 언어로 번역하려는 학교에 메인 사무실로 전화 주시기 바랍니다.

No-school Announcements

No-school announcements are posted to the following live media outlets:

RADIO STATIONS WBZ, WRKO, WCVB

TELEVISION CHANNELS 4, 5, and 7. Ashland Cable Channel 10.

In the event of extreme weather conditions, no-school and/or early dismissal announcements will be broadcast over the same stations. Please do not call the police or fire departments.

Connect Ed – The district employs an emergency phone system which allows the district to communicate with families in an effective and efficient manner. This system is used when school is cancelled, delayed or dismissed early. It is also used if an emergency situation arises.

Calendar of Events

Please check the Ashland Public Schools website for school and district information and updates:

www.ashland.k12.ma.us

[Click here for the APS School Year Calendar](#)

[Click Here for the Mindess Calendar](#)

Handbook Scope and Limitations

The school and administration reserve the right to establish fair and reasonable rules and regulations for circumstances that may require actions that are not covered in this handbook. In all cases, rules, regulations and possible consequences shall be as consistent as possible with previously established rules, regulations and consequences for similar incidents. Matters omitted from this handbook should not be interpreted as a limitation to the scope of the school's responsibility and, therefore, the school's authority in dealing with any type of infraction that may not be in the best interest of safety and welfare of our students.

These rules and policies apply to any student who is on school property, who is in attendance at school, or any school sponsored activity, or whose conduct at any time or place directly interferes with the operations, discipline, or general welfare of the school, students and staff.

*All students are responsible for adhering to the current rules
and regulations set forth by the state of Massachusetts.*

Statement of Non-Discrimination:

Massachusetts state law prohibits discrimination against students in public schools, including protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation. It states:

No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

The Ashland Public Schools offer all courses of study, extra-curricular activities and school services without regard of race, color, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. In addition, the School Department adheres to the Federal requirements provided under Title VI, Title IX and Section 504.

The Ashland Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or handicap in admission to, access to, treatment in or employment in its programs and activities.

The administrators identified at the link below have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

[Civil Rights Laws / District Coordinator Information](#)

DISTRICT POLICIES:

The School Committee “shall have the power to establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the Board of Education (M.G.L. c71, §37).” The Ashland Public Schools School Committee maintains policies to ensure the school district operates in an effective and efficient manner. Review of School Committee Policy is on-going throughout each school-year. It is the responsibility of each individual to monitor the Ashland Public School’s website for the most current policies. Policies printed within this handbook were current at the time of printing.

Please click the link below to access the Ashland Public School’s Policy Manual:

<http://policy.ctspublish.com/ashland-masc>

If you have any questions regarding current School Committee policies, please contact the Office of the Superintendent of Schools at 508-881-0150.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PLAN:

Students at Mindess School are expected to behave in a friendly and respectful manner. The rights and responsibilities of all students and staff members must be respected at all times. To support this goal, David Mindess School has adopted a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) model. The PBIS model is a systems approach to positive behavior which recognizes the importance of teaching positive behaviors. The Mindess PBIS team has led the school through the process of establishing core school values and developed a matrix of expected behaviors in the school (see below) that support these values. At Mindess, the core values are represented by the acronym STARS – Safety, Teamwork, Always Kind, Responsible and Show Respect. At the beginning of the year, teachers and staff will use lessons and demonstrations to help students understand their responsibilities in meeting behavioral expectations. These behavioral expectations will also be reviewed at whole school assemblies throughout the school year. Students are responsible for knowing our behavioral expectations, understanding their importance, and following them. [Click here for a copy of our behavior matrix.](#) We are committed to this research based model and its ability to improve behavior and academic outcomes for all students.

The David Mindess School uses a progressive discipline model. Progressive discipline is an approach that promotes positive student behavior utilizing appropriate consequences to address inappropriate student behavior. It has several important elements, including:

- **Engaging parents** – There will be ongoing dialogue with parents about students' achievement and behavior.
- **Helping students to learn** – Students will have opportunities to learn from the choices they make. Early and ongoing interventions will be provided when appropriate.
- **Establishing clear standards** – The school has a [matrix](#) of behaviors for students to follow and inappropriate behavior will have appropriate consequences.

The administrative approach to discipline will include the principal/assistant principal considering **mitigating factors** like the student's age, the circumstances of the behavior, and the student's history before determining the most appropriate way to respond to each situation. Administration will consider a range of options to address the behavior and help the student learn from his or her choices.

These options may include:

- Warning
- Conferences with teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, parents, and fellow students

- Loss of Recess
- Loss of school privileges
- Staying after school for detention
- Written or verbal apology
- Conflict Resolution strategies
- Reflective writing pieces
- Developing an action plan for improving behavior
- Practicing appropriate behavior
- Classroom removal
- Suspension

(Suspension from the school building may occur if a student's actions are disruptive to the learning process or if they pose a danger to self and/or others in the school building. The student's parent/guardian will be called into school to meet with the Assistant Principal to discuss the suspension. The student will be present at this meeting to explain his/her actions. The reason and dates(s) of all suspensions are confirmed by letter. A student who is suspended will not be allowed to attend classes or any school sponsored activities for the duration of the suspension. Students are expected to make up all missing work. A parent must accompany the student to school to meet with the Assistant Principal upon his/her return to school.)

In all cases administrative discretion will be exercised.

PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

In general, all students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in the student handbook and the school's code of conduct. In accordance with Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws and with federal law IDEA 2004: Section 615 (k), and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: 29 U.S.C. Section 794 (A), the school may suspend or remove your child from his or her current placement for no more than 10 school days. Special provisions are outlined below for students with a documented disability who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan.

Case-by case determination

School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a student with a disability who after disciplinary actions has been found to have violated the school code of conduct. (IDEA Regulations: 34 CFR Part 300, M.G.L. c71, §§ 37H, 37H½)

Procedures for suspension(s) not exceeding 10 school days

Any student with a disability may be suspended for up to ten (10) days during a school year. Disciplinary decisions are the same as for students without disabilities.

Special circumstances exist if your child: possesses, uses, sells or solicits illegal drugs on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; carries a weapon to school or a school-sponsored event; or inflicts serious bodily harm upon another person at school or a school-sponsored event. Under these circumstances, the principal may place your child in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days. Your child may remain in this IAES for a period of time not to exceed 45 school days. Thereafter, your child will return to the previously agreed-upon placement unless a hearing officer has ordered another placement, or you and the school agree to another placement.

Procedures for suspension of students with a disability when suspension exceeds 10 school days

If your child is suspended for more than 10 school days in a school year, this removal is considered a “change of placement”. A change of placement invokes certain procedural protections under federal special education law and Section 504.

Prior to any removal that constitutes a change of placement, the school will convene a Team meeting to develop a plan for conducting a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) that will be used as the basis for developing specific strategies to address your child’s problematic behavior.

Prior to any removal that constitutes a change in placement, the school must inform you that the law requires the school district to consider whether or not the behavior that forms the basis of the disciplinary action is related to your child’s disability. This consideration is called a “manifestation determination”. Parents have a right to participate in this process. All relevant information will be considered including the IEP or Section 504 Plan, teacher observations, and evaluations reports.

At a manifestation determination meeting, the Team will consider:

- Did the student’s disability *cause* or have a *direct and substantial relationship* to the conduct in question?
- Was the conduct a *direct result* of the district’s failure to implement the IEP?

If the manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action *was* related to the disability, then your child may not be removed from the current educational placement (unless under the special circumstances). The Team will review the IEP or Section 504 Plan and any behavioral intervention plans. If the manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action *was not* related to the disability, then the school may suspend or otherwise discipline your child according to the school’s code of conduct. For students with IEPs, during the period of time of removal from school that exceeds 10 school days, the school district must provide educational services that allow your child to continue to make educational progress. For students with Section 504 Plans, there is no automatic right to receive educational services beyond the 10th school day of suspension.

Special circumstances for exclusion

Special circumstances exist if your child: possesses, uses, sells or solicits illegal drugs on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; carries a weapon to school or a school-sponsored event; or inflicts serious bodily harm upon another person at school or a school-sponsored event. Under these circumstances, the principal may place your child in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days. Your child may remain in this IAES for a period of time not to exceed 45 school days. Thereafter, your child will return to the previously agreed-upon placement unless a hearing officer has ordered another placement, or you and the school agree to another placement. For students with Section 504 Plans, there is no automatic right to receive educational services beyond the 10th school day of suspension.

School personnel will provide Parent’s Notice of Procedural Safeguards (Special Education) or Notice of Parent and Student Rights under Section 504 for students with disabilities prior to any suspension exceeding 10 school days in one school year. These notices will provide an explanation of the process should there be disagreement regarding the manifestation determination or any placement decision. Parent, guardian and/or student may petition Bureau of Special Education Appeals for a hearing or the Office of Civil Rights (Section 504). Until issues are resolved, the student remains in his or her current placement.

MGL Chapter 71, Section 37H, 37H ½, & 37H ¾:

Section 37H

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, all student handbooks shall contain the following provisions:

(a) Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a

controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(b) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(c) Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal.

After said hearing, a principal may, in his discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(d) Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(e) Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion, under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student in an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

(f) Districts shall report to the department of elementary and secondary education the specific reasons for all suspensions and expulsions, regardless of duration or type, in a manner and form established by the commissioner. The department of elementary and secondary education shall use its existing data collection tools to obtain this information from districts and shall modify those tools, as necessary, to obtain the information. On an annual basis, the department of elementary and secondary education shall make district level de-identified data and analysis, including the total number of days each student is excluded during the school year, available to the public online in a machine readable format. This report shall include district level data disaggregated by student status and categories established by the commissioner.

(g) Under the regulations promulgated by the department, for each school that suspends or expels a significant number of students for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year, the commissioner shall investigate and, as appropriate, shall recommend models that incorporate intermediary steps prior to the use of suspension or expulsion. The results of the analysis shall be publicly reported at the school district level.

Section 37H1/2

Notwithstanding the provisions of section eighty-four and sections sixteen and seventeen of chapter seventy-six:

(a) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent

shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the suspension.

(b) Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

Any school district that suspends or expels a student under this section shall continue to provide educational services to the student during the period of suspension or expulsion, under section 21 of chapter 76. If the student moves to another district during the period of suspension or expulsion, the new district of residence shall either admit the student to its schools or provide educational services to the student under an education service plan, under section 21 of chapter 76.

Section 37H3/4

(a) This section shall govern the suspension and expulsion of students enrolled in a public school in the commonwealth who are not charged with a violation of subsections (a) or (b) of section 37H or with a felony under section 37H1/2.

(b) Any principal, headmaster, superintendent or other person acting as a decision-maker at a student meeting or hearing, when deciding the consequences for the student, shall exercise discretion; consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process; and avoid using expulsion as a consequence until other remedies and consequences have been employed.

(c) For any suspension or expulsion under this section, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled, or a designee, shall provide, to the student and to the parent or guardian of the student, notice of the charges and the reason for the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student. The student shall receive the written notification and shall have the opportunity to meet with the principal or headmaster, or a designee, to discuss the charges and reasons for the suspension or expulsion prior to the suspension or expulsion taking effect. The principal or headmaster, or a designee, shall ensure that the parent or guardian of the student is included in the meeting, provided that such meeting may take place without the parent or guardian only if the principal or headmaster, or a designee, can document reasonable efforts to include the parent or guardian in that meeting. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations that address a principal's duties under this subsection and procedures for including parents in student exclusion meetings, hearings or interviews under this subsection.

(d) If a decision is made to suspend or expel the student after the meeting, the principal or headmaster, or a designee, shall update the notification for the suspension or expulsion to reflect the meeting with the student. If a student has been suspended or expelled for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year, the student and the parent or guardian of the student shall also receive, at the time of the suspension or expulsion decision, written notification of a right to appeal and the process for appealing the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student; provided, however, that the suspension or expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing. The principal or headmaster or a designee shall notify the superintendent in writing, including, but not limited to, by electronic means, of any out-of-school suspension imposed on a student enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 prior to such suspension taking effect. That notification shall describe the student's alleged misconduct and the reasons for suspending the student out-of-school. For the purposes of this section, the term "out-of-school suspension" shall mean a disciplinary action imposed by school officials to remove a student from participation in school activities for 1 day or more.

(e) A student who has been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year shall have the right to appeal the suspension or expulsion to the superintendent. The student or a parent or

guardian of the student shall notify the superintendent in writing of a request for an appeal not later than 5 calendar days following the effective date of the suspension or expulsion; provided, that a student and a parent or guardian of the student may request, and if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days. The superintendent or a designee shall hold a hearing with the student and the parent or guardian of the student within 3 school days of the student's request for an appeal; provided that a student or a parent or guardian of the student may request and, if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days; provided further, that the superintendent, or a designee, may proceed with a hearing without a parent or guardian of the student if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, cross-examine witnesses and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal in writing within 5 calendar days of the hearing. That decision shall be the final decision of the school district with regard to the suspension or expulsion.

(f) No student shall be suspended or expelled from a school or school district for a time period that exceeds 90 school days, beginning the first day the student is removed from an assigned school building.

Bullying Prevention Plan:

Please click [here for the entire Ashland Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#).

Bullying, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §37O, means the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include cyberbullying. Cyberbullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a: wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including but not limited to: electronic mail, internet communications, instant messaging or facsimile communications.

It is important for all members of the community to understand that conflict is not automatically synonymous with bullying. Arguing, bantering back and forth, ignoring, roughhousing and fighting, while potentially serious forms of conflict; are not necessarily instances of bullying. **Bullying is characterized by intention, repetition, and power imbalance.** Not every conflict meets these criteria.

In Ashland students are expected to behave in a friendly and respectful manner. Our goal is to maintain a positive environment, which promotes learning and contributes to each child's social, emotional, academic and physical development.

It is the responsibility of the building Principal or his/her designee to make clear to students and staff that bullying, cyberbullying, retaliation or harassment in the school building, on school grounds, on our school busses or school sanctioned transportation, or at school sponsored function will not be tolerated. The Principal or his/her designee shall be responsible for the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention procedures, including investigating all charges of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

Please refer to Appendix A which includes a draft district wide process, draft forms, and procedures to support the reporting, response and investigation.

Reporting bullying or retaliation: The Ashland Public School Staff members are required to immediately report to the Principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witness or has reliable information about bullying.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, or guardians, or others. This can be in oral or written form, face to face, via telephone or by email when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is a critical factor in school success for students. Studies have shown that consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation. **Please refer to the [School Committee Attendance Policy](#), for more details.** Please call the attendance line at **508 881-0194** if your child is going to be absent. For guidelines regarding illness and school attendance please follow this link: <http://www.ashland.k12.ma.us/health-services>

The Mindess School uses a “Call Back Program” to insure the safety of our students. If the school is not notified of a student’s absence, school staff will begin calling the emergency contacts provided for that student. If no one is reached to confirm the child’s whereabouts, the police will be notified.

The Mindess School procedures for attendance/dismissal in Grades 3-5 are as follows:

- During any period of time that a student is out of the assigned classroom, he/she will be considered absent. This applies to sickness and/or personal family absence.
- If the student is out of school for the morning portion of the day, they will be considered tardy. If the child comes into school after 11:00 AM, they are considered absent. If the student arrives on time and is dismissed after 11:00 AM, they are considered dismissed present, but if they are dismissed prior to 11:00 AM, they are considered dismissed absent.
- Students arriving later than 7:30am are considered tardy. Missing a bus, traffic, weather conditions, or oversleeping are not excused reasons for tardiness. The Principal makes judgments regarding the legitimacy of a specific tardy and determines appropriate action in cases of excessive, repeated lateness. **Upon the fourth unexcused tardiness in a given term, students may receive an office detention at the discretion of the school administration.**
- **Parents/guardians are discouraged from taking students out of school for vacations during school sessions. Such absenteeism may disrupt the continuity of the student’s learning. The administration does not permit written assignments covering such absences.**

- A student is considered **truant** if he/she is absent without a valid cause for a school day or portion thereof. The School Resource Officer of the Ashland Police Department will be consulted when a student is truant.
- In the event a child is absent on two or more consecutive days, parents may pick up homework at the end of day three.
- The school should be notified in writing if a child is to be dismissed before the end of the day. **We strongly discourage student dismissals after 1:55 PM.**

For safety reasons the school cannot dismiss a child to anyone other than a parent unless written permission is received from the parent in advance.

Early Release Days:

Students will be dismissed at **10:30am**. If your child is planning on walking to a restaurant, a friend's house, or the public library, he/she must bring in a note from home with a parent signature stating where he/she is going. This note must be turned into the homeroom teacher in the morning. We cannot accept **faxes, emails, or phone calls** in lieu of written permission. **Additionally, students will not be allowed to call home for notes. They must have the note with them when they arrive at school.**

TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

Buses

All students must have a bus pass to ride a bus. Students may only take the buses to which they are assigned. Please note that late buses do not make the same stops as the school day buses. Because there are a limited number of late buses, their stops are in the "vicinity" of the usual stops. Additionally, Ashland High School, Ashland Middle School and the Mindess School share the same late buses. Therefore, students from each school could be present on the bus. There is no exact schedule for these buses and daily variations based on ridership are possible. The bus routes are posted on the bulletin board in the lobby and can be found by clicking [here](#). Adults will be available to assist children in taking the correct late bus.

Drop off and Pick-Up Procedures

As student safety is our top priority, this letter is being written to review parent drop-off and pick-up procedures as we prepare for the beginning of the school year. For the safety of all of our students, please observe the following procedures:

- We strongly *recommend* that cars enter Concord Street from the Fountain Street side when coming to the school.
- Please approach Mindess so that you are taking a right-hand turn into the driveway. *This is for the safety of everyone entering the school grounds.*
- Student drop-off begins at **7:25 AM** each morning. Do not let your child out of your car until you see a staff member out and ready to receive them.
- Pick-up begins at **1:55 PM** each afternoon.
(**Early release days at 10:30 AM**)
- During morning drop-off, please use the left-hand side of the entrance driveway, towards the "loop."
- Pull forward if there is room to do so. (This helps the process go quickly, which helps clear traffic from Concord Road.)
- Children should exit **on the passenger side only.**

*****Please do not allow your child to exit your vehicle on the driver's side for safety reasons.**

- Parents should remain in their vehicles at all times.
- Students should remain buckled until they are ready to exit their vehicle.
- Please encourage your child to be ready with all belongings when you are next in line.
- Please wait for the cars in front of you to go before pulling out.

*****Do not pass other vehicles in the loop.**

- Please exit the loop by taking a right-hand turn only for safety reasons
- For the safety of the children, please arrange to drop off and pick up your child in the loop area only. We only have the ability to supervise the students while they are on school grounds.
- There is a “**No Parking Here to Corner**” sign on the school side of Concord Street. This is to help make the turn into the driveway easier for all.
- Cars may line up on Concord Street approaching the school before the “No Parking Here to Corner” sign.

*****Please do not park on the sidewalk.**

The same rules apply for pick-ups in the afternoon, however if you are picking your child up from an after school activity, cars should line up by pulling all the way down to the auditorium doors.

Before Your Child Leaves For School

If your child is participating in an after-school activity, please be sure he/she has a note if needed, and knows how he/she will be getting home: i.e., being picked up or taking the late bus. Once students are dismissed to after-school activities, it is not possible to get a message to the child about dismissal. It is therefore important that you have this discussion with your child before they come to school.

PARENT INFORMATION:

Parents are welcome in the building for conferences, various presentations, meetings, occasional lunch, etc. All visitors must enter and exit the building at the main entrance (first set of doors on the driveway), and sign in on the Visitor's Log which is on the counter outside the front office. Visitors must wear a visitor's badge and check in with the secretary to advise where you are headed. No one will be let through the locked doors unless they have checked in with the secretary. Please note that this is for the safety and security of the children. Additionally, should there be a need to evacuate the building; the Fire Department has requested we keep a log of people visiting the building. When your business in the school is complete, please sign out on the Visitor's Log to indicate that you are no longer in the building and kindly return the visitor's badge to the basket on the table. The school calendar can be found by clicking [here](#).

Volunteers:

Mindess School welcomes the opportunity to have parents as well as members of the community-at-large involved in school activities. Since volunteers will be working with children within our school building, we must require that all volunteers complete and submit a CORI packet. The packet includes a **CORI Request Form, a Statement of Confidentiality, and a Health Emergency Information Form**. These packets can be obtained through your student's teacher or the main office. After completing these forms, attach the necessary documents and return them to the main office. At that time you will also be required to present your driver's license for verification of your identity. Forms will be forwarded on to the Business Office for further processing. **All information submitted will be kept confidential.**

Leaving a Message for Teacher:

Should you wish to speak with your child's teacher, you may leave a message with the front office staff. However, teachers will not be able to return the call while school is in session. You can also email the teacher with your telephone number and a good time to reach you. Our email addresses end with @ashland.k12.ma.us. Most often the front part of the email address is the person's first letter of their first

name and their last name, so David Mindess would have an email address of dmindess@ashland.k12.ma.us.

HEALTH SERVICES:

The role of the professional school nurse is to strengthen the educational process by assisting students in maintaining optimal health. This is accomplished in a variety of ways: evaluation of health concerns, first aid and emergency care, medication administration, monitoring of chronic illnesses, maintaining individual health records in accordance with DPH requirements, and performing State mandated health screenings.

Illness

Families are strongly encouraged to communicate any student health concerns to the school nurse. If your child has allergies, asthma, diabetes, seizures, attention deficit disorder or any other medical or mental health issues please communicate with your school nurse regarding treatment plans and medications prior to school entry or upon diagnosis.

The nurse is available throughout the school day for students and staff who are injured or become ill in school.

Those who wish to see the nurse during school time must secure a pass from the teacher and present it to the nurse. If the nurse is not in her office, the student must report to the main office so that the nurse may be located and notified. If a student misuses the nurse's office, administration and parents/guardians will be notified. Time spent in the nurse's office is for illness not for common fatigue.

Optimal learning requires good health. In an effort to promote parent-school cooperation for the benefit of our students, the following guidelines concerning health issues are enforced.

Fever: Students should not be sent to school with a fever (temperature of 100 degrees or higher). A student must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication before returning to school.

Strep Throat: If strep throat is suspected, students must remain out of school until the culture results are known. If the culture is positive, the student must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.

For any illness requiring antibiotic treatment, the student must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.

Students returning to school after recovering from a communicable disease must be readmitted through the school nurse's office.

Head Lice: If the parent of a child finds lice or nits in their child's head, the school nurse must be notified. If lice or nits are found by the school nurse, the child will be sent home for treatment. After treatment the student must return with a parent so that the student may be checked by the school nurse. In order to return to school, hair must be free of all nits and lice.

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to provide transportation and further care of the student if the student becomes ill or injured on school property. Students may not be sent home without parental approval. In an emergency situation the school nurse will call 911 and the student will be transported to the nearest hospital.

Medication

The School Nurse is responsible for the administration of all medications taken by the students during the school day, unless otherwise specified. The school nurse, with the permission of the Department of Public Health, will delegate authority to administer medication on a field trip to another adult.

The following form must be completed and on file in the Health Office before any medication is administered:

- Doctor's Order (Renewed yearly)
- Parent/Guardian Consent

Under protocols written by Ashland's School Physician, nurses may administer Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, Tums, and lozenges as needed. Parent permission for these is required and is included on the Health-Emergency form completed at the beginning of each school year.

Medication Policy and all forms can be found on [APS website](#) under Health Services link.

Health Record (Physical Exams and Immunizations)

Each student has an individual health file. Please submit any new physical exams or immunization information to the school nurse. All students new to Ashland Public Schools are required to have a current physical examination and up to date immunizations. Immunization requirements change when new State regulations are passed.

State Mandated Requirements (Physical Exams and Screenings)

State mandated health requirements include the following: Physical exams are required in grades PK, K, 4, 7, and 10. Vision screening occurs annually in grades PK, K-5, 7 and 10. Hearing screening occurs annually in grades PK, K-3, 7 and 10. Postural screening occurs annually in grades 5 through 9. Body Mass Index (BMI) screening occurs annually in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. Parents who choose to waive BMI screening must submit a written request to school nurse.

Management of Life-Threatening Allergies

Ashland Public Schools recognizes that students with life-threatening allergies (LTA) require reasonable accommodations necessary to ensure access to available education and education-related benefits.

Ashland Public Schools cannot guarantee to provide an allergen-free environment for all students with LTA. The goal is to minimize the risk to students with LTA. The guidelines established include building-based plans, the implementation of Individual Care Plans, and training programs for personnel. Specific responsibilities for the student, parent, and school personnel are listed in the policy.

Chronic Illness Policy

It is the policy of Ashland schools to work together with parents, students, health care providers, and the community to provide a safe and supportive educational environment for students with chronic illnesses and to ensure that students with chronic illnesses have the same educational opportunities as other students.

Please click [here](#) for more health related information on APS website under Health Services link.

Appendices

[Technology Use in School](#)

[PBIS Matrix](#)

[Handbook Signature Page \(English\)](#)

[Handbook Signature Page \(Spanish\)](#)

[Handbook Signature Page \(Portuguese\)](#)

