

Leicester Elementary School

Family Handbook

2021-2022

A Message from the Principals

Dear Families,

Welcome to Elementary School! We take pride in our connections to students as well as their families while providing an excellent education for all of our children. We are pleased to provide you with this handbook, a vital communication link between school and home. You will find explicit policies and procedures in detail throughout the handbook and we ask that you share these with your child as we start our new year together. Be sure to keep a copy of the handbook handy and use it as a reference.

It is our experience that children are most likely to succeed when there is a strong partnership between home and school. The partnership is formed through open communication and cooperation. We look forward to working with you in support of the students we share; we strive to challenge them and help them meet their academic and social goals.

We are delighted that you are part of our elementary community and wish you and your child a happy and successful educational experience this school year.

Sincerely,
Tina Boss, Principal
Tracey Steiger, Assistant Principal

Mission/Core Values and Beliefs

MISSION

Students will be provided a safe, supportive environment that fosters an enthusiasm for learning, a respect for self and others, and the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge to reach their full potential in an ever-changing world.

BELIEFS

- ALL students can learn and should be challenged to reach their full potential.
- School should be a positive and safe environment for everyone.
- Social, emotional, and academic learning are all essential for student success.
- Everyone should be treated with kindness and respect.
- Education is the shared responsibility of students, families, the school, and the community.



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ACADEMIC INFORMATION

A. Homework Policy - K-2

It is suggested that approximately 10-20 minutes be spent daily on informal homework assignments such as: completion of classwork, reading independently or with an adult, vocabulary review, practice with spelling concepts and math facts, and other assignments at the teacher's discretion.

B. Homework Policy - 3-4

Research states that students should be participating in approximately 10 minutes of homework per grade level. 3rd graders should have approximately 30 minutes of homework, and 4th graders, 40 minutes. Homework should be high quality, meaningful and support learning in one of the following ways: pre-learning, checking for understanding, practicing and processing. Beyond the assigned homework, it is strongly recommended that a portion of your child's leisure time be spent reading a book, magazine, or other publication at their reading level.

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's policy on Homework.

C. Report Card Policy

Report cards are issued three times a year, at the end of each 60 day marking period. A grade of 60 or above is passing. Your teacher may include comments on the progress report or report card; these comments are good indicators as to your success. If you or your parents have concerns regarding your grade, both you and your parents are encouraged to speak with your teacher. Report Cards and Progress Reports will all be released electronically through PowerSchool. If you would like a paper copy printed, please notify the school's Main Office.

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's policy on Report Cards

D. School Committee Policies on Academics

Please follow these links to view [School Committee Policies](#) on the following:

[Support Services Programs](#)

[Title I Program](#)

[English Language Learners](#)

[Summer Schools](#)

ATTENDANCE

A. Attendance Policy

The faculty and administrators of the Leicester Public Schools want to provide the best education possible for your child. In order to ensure the academic success of your child, your cooperation in encouraging regular attendance is essential. Please be aware that another essential purpose of this policy is to provide a safe educational environment for our students. Massachusetts State Law requires that school is in session for 180 days. The law further states that except for specific reasons, students must be in attendance.

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's policy for Absences and Excuses

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's policy for Exclusion and Exemptions from School Attendance

What do I need to do if my child is absent?

In the event that your child is going to be absent from school, parents need to report the child's absence to the school nurse or main office. Please call 508-892-7050.

B. Class Attendance

Students are expected to be present each day school is in session. Students who are absent more than 20 days for any unacceptable reason may result in retention. The following are considered acceptable reasons for absence from school:

Death in the family

Religious holiday when related to the student's creed or belief.

Required and documented court appearances.

Personal Illness or Injury

When a student is absent due to illness, if the administration suspects abuse, one or more of the following may occur:

1. A physician's note will be required.
2. A conference will be held with a building administrator.
3. Court proceedings will be initiated.

Other absences due to extenuating circumstances may be excused if arrangements are made and approved in advance with the administration. Upon returning to school, the student must bring a dated note from the parent/guardian stating the reason for the absence. Notes are due within 3 days.

When a child is out of school for more than five (5) consecutive days, or for a contagious illness, a note from the attending physician is required before the student can be readmitted to school. The following are considered unacceptable reasons for absence from school:

Truancy: Truancy results when the student is absent from school grounds without permission.

Vacations: It should be specifically noted that personal and family vacations are not to be considered an acceptable reason for absence from school.

Medical Appointments: Medical appointments that are not of an emergency nature such as annual or routine checkups.

Participation in non-school related activities: Participation in non-school related activities such as beauty pageants, athletic tournaments and private lessons.

BEHAVIOR

A. Student Conduct

In our discussions with students, we emphasize four basic expectations that cover the different aspects of the school day. These are, BE SAFE, BE RESPONSIBLE, BE RESPECTFUL, and BE A LEARNER. In conversation with students, we outline how these concepts are demonstrated in different aspects of the school. We continually strive to teach students the behavior that we want them to display. This is a process for all children and there will be times students make mistakes or act inappropriately. The great majority of behaviors are correctable with teacher redirection. This occurs daily in all our classrooms. Some other behaviors disrupt other students or are in the beginning stages of developing into a pattern that can impact the culture of the class and they cross the line into not being safe, responsible, or respectful. In these cases, teachers and or

administrators will reach out to parents to enlist their help in reinforcing the behaviors we need to see in school. In some of these instances, a natural/logical consequence may be the result of poor student choices. The elementary schools will always follow district guidelines in disciplinary actions. Please click [HERE](#) for grades K-5 Code of Conduct.

B. School Discipline for Students with Special Education Services

Federal regulations (IDEA) provide students with IEPs with procedural rights and protections related to student discipline. Students may be suspended up to 10 cumulative days per school year. When a student is excluded for more than ten school days in a school year, the suspension constitutes a change in placement. A change in placement can also be defined as a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days that constitutes a pattern. When a student with an IEP/504 Plan has close to 10 cumulative or consecutive days of suspension (or earlier when the removals constitute a pattern), the Team must convene a Manifestation Determination Meeting to determine if the student's behavior was caused by or is directly a result of the disability or lack of implementation of an IEP or 504 Plan. This also includes notifying parents of a decision of a manifestation determination and providing them with written notice and procedural safeguards.

At the Manifestation Determination Team Meeting, the Team will review the student record and history to include the IEP/504 Plan, staff input and information provided by the parent/guardian to determine if the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct relationship to the student's disability or if the behavior was a direct result of the failure of the District to fully implement the IEP/504 Plan. If the behavior was not a result of the student's disability or the result of a failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan, the school may impart discipline according to the school's code of conduct. However, the District must provide education during the period of suspension. Regulation (603 CMR 53.14) requires an alternative education opportunity for regular education students, as well as students with disabilities (including those with a 504 Plan) who are excluded/expelled from school.

[DESE flowchart](#) for when a student with an IEP violates the code of conduct

Under 37H, a student who poses a serious threat to the school environment may require an interim alternative education setting for up to 45 school days or a long term placement due to safety. Conduct exhibited may include: possession, use, or soliciting to sell a controlled substance; possessing a weapon; serious threat of bodily harm/injury inflicted on an individual at school or at a school function.

C. Bullying Policy

Bullying, like other misbehavior, is expressly forbidden. If you have concerns regarding whether any bullying is occurring please get in touch with your child's teacher or the administration as soon as possible. Many potential bullying issues can be avoided if they are addressed early. Nonetheless, we will promptly investigate and address every allegation of bullying. We will ensure a safe and productive school environment for all students. Please click [HERE](#) for the School Committee's Anti-Bullying Policy and [HERE](#) for the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

For more specifics on the school committee policies please refer to:

[Student Discipline](#)

[Student Conduct on School Buses](#)

[Sexual Harassment](#)

D. Behavior Expectations

Please click [HERE](#) to view the Leicester Elementary School Behavior Expectations.

E. Dress Code

Please dress your children appropriately for the weather conditions. We strive to get students outside for recess as long as the weather is permissible. They do go outside during the winter months, so be sure to send them with hats, mittens, and warm jackets when it is cold. Additionally, after many years, we have learned that some clothing choices do not work well at school:

- Avoid sending students to school wearing long dresses. They tend to trip on them going down stairs or on the playground
- Backless shoes cause accidents on the playground as well.
- Avoid sending students to school with stringed ties in sweatshirts or jackets and items dangling from backpacks. These items get caught on equipment and can cause injury.
- While it is hot in the buildings in the early fall and late spring, we ask that students refrain from wearing tank tops that have spaghetti straps (thinner than 2 fingers) and “short-shorts” that hit above the student’s fingertips with arms at their sides.
- Finally, clothing depicting violence, offensive language, or generally inappropriate information for school is not allowed. Students will be asked to cover these items up or if necessary, parents will be called to bring a change of clothes to school

F. Electronics/Toys

Please refrain from allowing your child to bring electronics, such as cell phones or ipads, and toys to school. The school cannot be held responsible for a student's personal belongings being broken or stolen. If a student brings in something from home we deem not applicable for school use, the school may have the parent report to the school to pick up the item.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR

A. Before and After School Program

The before and after school programs provide quality care for children in kindergarten through fourth grade, from 7:00 am start time and 5:00 pm end time. Contact person: Michelle Hammond - elebas@lpsma.net

B. Elementary School Band & Chorus

The Elementary School has a beginner band and chorus with practices held during the week. Please contact Alyssa Hiltz at hiltza@lpsma.net for more information

GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Building Visitor Procedure

All visitors must report to the school office to sign in with a staff member and receive a visitor’s badge. Please click [HERE](#) to view the school committee policy regarding building visitors.

We keep our doors locked for the safety of both students and staff. You are asked to ring the bell outside the front door and we will ask why you are requesting entrance. These procedures have been established for the safety of our students. We are “parent friendly” but take the task of protecting all children and adults in our building seriously. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

B. Volunteer Information

The elementary school truly appreciates any help from our parent/community volunteers. If you have a desire to volunteer at the elementary school, please call the main office. Please note that for safety and security, all volunteers will need to complete a CORI check before they can begin to help out. These forms can be filled out at the main school office or at Central Office.

C. School Contact Information

Please click [HERE](#) to view the Elementary School's contact information.

D. School Hours

Elementary School Hours: 8:15am-2:45pm

K-4: Unloading of buses and parent drop off begins at 8:05am with students reporting directly to their classroom. Students who arrive at school after 8:15am must report to the office for a late slip.

PreK - located at the side of the High School Building: hours are 8:15am-10:45am, and 12:15-2:45pm for half day classes. Full day classes run 8:15am-2:45pm.

E. School Delays, Cancellations, and Early Dismissals

If the conditions warrant a delay or cancellation, a decision will typically be made by 5:45AM. The information will be posted on TV station Channel 5 and on Radio Stations WSRS 96.1 FM and WTAG 530AM. Channel 5 offers a service whereby parents can sign up for either email or telephone (home/cell) notification of school dismissals free of charge. If you are interested in signing up, go to www.thebostonchannel.com/closingssignup/index.html. Additionally, the superintendent has a Twitter and Facebook page (Marilyn Tencza for Twitter and Leicester Public Schools for Facebook) which will be updated with this information as soon as it is available.

If the weather unexpectedly worsens after a delay has been called, the District will make a call notification announcement informing parents of the change to a cancellation; the same TV and radio stations will be updated as well. When there is a two hour delay, there will be no morning preschool sessions.

The same notification procedure will be used for early dismissals. Schools will be dismissed in the following order: High School, Middle School, and then Elementary School. Please make sure you have a plan for your child in the event of an early dismissal.

As always, the decision to cancel or delay is a difficult one that is made with the best available information at the time and always keeping in mind the safety of our students. As a parent, if you disagree with the decision that was made and feel it is unsafe to send your child on the bus, you have the option to keep your child home or transport him/her in your own vehicle.

F. Student Records

The Leicester Public Schools complies with applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to student records. Those laws and regulations are designed to ensure a parent's and eligible student's rights to access, inspect, and to request amendment of the child's student record.

For a copy of the School Committee Policy on Student Records, please click [HERE](#).

G. Acceptable Use Policy for Technology

Leicester Public Schools provides student users and staff access to the district's electronic network. The Leicester Public Schools Acceptable Use Policy/Powerschool Acceptable Use Policy is available by clicking [HERE](#).

H. Communication

At the Elementary School we strive to go paperless to the greatest extent possible. There will be occasional notices and communications sent home with your child or through the mail, so please keep a look-out for these in your child's homework folder. We utilize the web page (elementary.leicester.k12.ma.us) for the most up-to-date information, class pages, and events, as well as the Elementary School Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/leicesterelementary/>). Finally, the Elementary Schools will also make use of an automated phone/email system to alert you to important messages that need to be communicated in a timely manner.

I. Parent/Teacher Conferences/Communication

Parent/teacher conferences are held in late fall. However, should you wish to meet with your child's teacher at any other time, you may write a note to the teacher, email, or call the office and the teacher will get back to you to schedule an appointment. Staff email is the last name and first initial followed by @lpsma.net. (ex. Jane Smith smithj@lpsma.net)

J. School Council

School councils are mandated by the Education Reform Act. The school council's function is to help develop the yearly school improvement plan and address school community issues. Nominations and elections are held in the fall. The school council consists of administration, teachers, community members, and parents. If you would like more information on the school council, please call the main office of either school. Please click [HERE](#) to view the school committee policy on school councils.

Health, Safety & Transportation

A. LPS Health Policies

We have linked LPS district policies related to the nurse's office to this handbook. They are:

[Administering medicine to students](#)

[Communicable Diseases](#)

[Head Lice](#)

[Physical examination of students](#)

[Protocol for administering medication to students](#)

[Protocol for administering over-the-counter medications](#)

[Nurse Coverage on Field Trips](#)

B. Guidelines For Keeping Sick Children Home From School

Each day, many parents are faced with a decision: Should they keep their sick children at home or send them off to school? Often the way a child looks and acts can make the decision an obvious one. The following guidelines should be considered when making the decision:

Fever. A child should remain at home with a fever greater than 100°. A child can return to school after he/she has been fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol or Motrin).

Diarrhea/Vomiting. A child with diarrhea and/or vomiting should stay at home and return to school only after being symptom-free for 24 hours, unless otherwise specified by the school nurse or licensed health care provider.

Conjunctivitis. Following a diagnosis of conjunctivitis, a child may return to school 24 hours after the first dose of prescribed medication.

Rashes. Common infectious diseases with rashes are most contagious in the early stages. A child with a suspicious rash should return to school only after a health-care provider has made a diagnosis and authorized a child's return to school.

Colds. Consider keeping your child at home if he/she is experiencing discomfort from cold symptoms, such as nasal congestion and cough. A continuous green discharge from the nose may be a sign of infection. Consider having a child seen by your health-care provider.

A sick child cannot learn effectively and is unable to participate in classes in a meaningful way. Keeping a sick child home prevents the spread of illness in the school community and allows a child the opportunity to rest and recover.

C. Parent Drop off/Dismissal Procedures

School Hours: 8:15am-2:45pm

K-4: Unloading of buses and parent drop-off begins at 8:05am with students reporting directly to their classroom. Students who arrive at school after 8:15am must report to the office for a late slip.

PreK: hours are 8:15am-10:45am, and 12:15pm-2:45pm for half day classes. Full day classes run 8:15am-2:45pm.

Drop Off: ALL traffic will enter the Elementary School parking lot with drop off vehicles staying to the right along the perimeter. Drop off vehicles will proceed to the back blacktop to wait for an elementary staff member to greet you and escort your child to the building when it is safe to do so. **Please arrive no earlier than 8:00 for drop-off.** For student safety, we ask that you **do not park** and walk your child to the building. All buses and vans will stay to the left and proceed to the bus lane in front of the building to unload. Buses have priority for unloading and departure.

Dismissal: ALL traffic will enter the Elementary School parking lot with drop off vehicles staying to the right along the perimeter. Drop off vehicles will proceed to the back blacktop and wait for an elementary staff member to escort your child to your vehicle when it is safe to do. **Please arrive no earlier than 2:40pm** for pick-up to allow buses to enter the parking lot. Buses will stay to the left, and have priority for loading and departure. **Please DO NOT pass any bus with the lights flashing or stop sign engaged.**

If you need to dismiss your student prior to the end of the school day, please notify the office prior to picking your child up so that we have them ready for you. You may send a note to the teacher or call the main office to notify us.

D. Parking Lot Safety

The safety of our students is our top priority and it is imperative that we are responsible and aware of our surroundings while driving through our parking lot.

Speed Limit: Vehicles should not exceed **10 miles per hour** in our parking lots.

Idling Vehicles: Due to [state law](#), vehicles are not allowed to idle on school grounds within 100' of the building.

Smoking: It is against Massachusetts [state law](#) to smoke on school property. Please refrain from smoking in your vehicle during parent drop off/pick up.

Bus Safety Lights: It is against Massachusetts [state law](#) to pass a school bus or student transport vehicle with their red safety lights and stop sign engaged. Please be mindful of this as you navigate the roads and school driveway.

E. Bus Company Information

The school behavioral expectations regarding safety, responsibility, and respectfulness all apply on the school bus. Students are expected to stay seated, keep their voices at a reasonable level, keep their limbs to themselves, and follow all adult directions while on the bus. Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's policy on Student Conduct on School Buses

If there is misbehavior on the bus beyond what the drivers can handle, the school will be notified to write a bus slip for the child in question. An administrator then addresses the issue with the child and in the case of multiple issues his/her family will be notified. Students who get written up more than twice in a term will lose bus privileges for up to 3 days.

For safety's sake, all of the buses are equipped with 2-way radios. Drivers regularly speak to school administrators about transportation issues. Bus schedules and routes are posted on the district's website prior to the start of the school year under the Transportation tab. Please contact AA Transportation if you have questions or concerns at 508-892-5424.

Please click [HERE](#) for a link to the Student Transportation Services SC Policy.

F. Foodservice Policies

Please send your child to school with a snack, drink and a packed lunch or money to purchase a lunch every day. Charging lunches is not permitted. Our food services continue to improve the taste and nutritional offerings of the meals available to students. Monthly menus are published on the website and sent home with students. Breakfast and lunch are available daily for all students. Families are encouraged to apply for reduced/free lunch programs and will be awarded this status if they meet program qualifications. More information on school lunches, breakfast, and myschoolbucks.com (our program to pre pay for your child's school breakfast/lunch) can be found on the District web page under the Foodservices tab on the left side of the page.

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's Policy for School Meal Charges

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's Policy for Free and Reduced Price Food Service

G. Wellness Policy

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's Policy for School and District Wellness Program

H. Emergency Plans

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's Policy for Emergency Plans.

Please click [HERE](#) to view the School Committee's Policy for Safety Programs.