



# **Sterling Public Schools**

Where kids achieve!

## **2023-2024 Elementary Handbook**

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Sterling Public Schools reminds you that this handbook is only a summary of board policies governing the district and that board policies are available to the public at the district office or accessed through the district website at [www.sterlingpublicschools.org](http://www.sterlingpublicschools.org)

## **Accident, Illness and Emergency Information**

If your child becomes ill or is injured in school, he/she should report it to the teacher or to the office immediately. The school nurse or secretary will call home if necessary.

In the event of a serious accident or illness at school, parents will be called. If we are unable to reach parents, emergency numbers will be called. Please be sure that people indicated as emergency contacts are aware that you have given the school their numbers. If at any point during the school year this information should change, please notify the school immediately so that we may update our records.

## **Aggressive Behavior**

Efforts, including the use of early intervention and progressive discipline, shall be made to deter students, while at school or a school-related event, from engaging in aggressive behavior that may reasonably produce physical or psychological harm to someone else. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student who engages in aggressive behavior are notified of the incident. The failure to provide such notification does not limit the Board's authority to impose discipline, including suspension or expulsion, for such behavior.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

Children should not arrive at school until the building doors are open (Franklin and Jefferson 7:50 AM; Washington and Lincoln 7:40 AM) Students will independently enter the building and go directly to their classroom. Parents may escort students to the building door. Following school dismissal, students should leave school grounds promptly.

## **Attendance Regulations**

### **Absences**

Research indicates that regular attendance at school is very important. Please help your child develop a commitment to come to school everyday on time. Students with excessive absences and/or tardiness are subject to discipline and referral to the Whiteside County Truants' Alternative Program or the Sterling Police Department. Unexcused absences or tardiness are considered trancies. If it is necessary for your child to be absent, please call the school office.

In accordance with state law, we are required to verify student absences from school within the first hours of the school day. Please call the office by 8:00 A.M. to report your child's absence. An answering machine is available from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. for your calling convenience. When reporting a student absence, please provide the following information: your name and relationship to the student, the student's name, the name of the student's teacher, and the reason for the absence. If due to illness, please include specific symptoms (fever, nausea,

headache) so that our school nurse is able to track certain illnesses and watch for trends and patterns of illnesses. Your cooperation with this policy is greatly appreciated. Failure to notify the school of a student's absence will result in an unexcused absence. In order to be eligible for the perfect attendance award, students need to be present everyday with no tardiness.

After three consecutive days of excused absence or ten cumulative days of excused or unexcused absence, verification will be required, or at the very least, a visit to the school nurse prior to the start of the school day. Students with four unexcused absences will be referred to the Whiteside County Truant's Alternative Program.

### **Mental Health Days**

Public Act 102-0321 (Senate Bill 1577) amends the compulsory attendance article of the School Code by allowing students to take up to five mental or behavioral health days per year. A student is not required to provide a medical note and must be given the opportunity to make up any schoolwork missed during such absences. Following the second mental health day, a student may be referred to the appropriate school personnel.

Keep in mind "chronic absence" means absences that total 10% or more of school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause ... – 105 ILCS 5/26-18. Mental health days are not counted as unexcused absences; therefore, they will not impact truancy.

Students must be called off for mental health days, with the caller giving the reason as mental health day; after two mental health days, the school counselor will be notified, and will follow up with the student to provide support upon their return.

These 5 mental health days will be included within the 10 excused days allocated as student absences for the year, not requiring notes or documentation.

### **Tardiness**

It is important for students to be on time at the beginning of each school day. Tardiness and absences do affect a child's academic and social progress. Students should report to the office first when tardy. This enables us to take care of attendance and lunch count. After 5, 10, and 15 tardy days, families may receive a letter notifying of these tardies and providing an opportunity for support from the school and administration.

### **Vacations**

Every effort should be made to plan vacations around school holidays. When vacations occur during the school calendar, please inform the school office in writing at least one week prior to the dates of student absence. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to make sure that their student completes assigned make-up work. Absences beyond five days, due to vacation, will be considered unexcused.

## **Beverages**

Students are not allowed to be in possession of, or consume energy drinks (Monster, Red Bull, etc., excluding sport drinks) at any time on school property or at school events. Students are not allowed to have soda pop during the school day.

## **Bicycle and Scooters**

Students are permitted to ride bicycles to school with parental knowledge and permission. Students should walk their bicycles while on the school grounds and should lock their bicycles in the bicycle racks located on the playground. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen bicycles. For safety reasons, skateboards, roller skates, and scooters-may not be used on the playground.

## **Breakfast /Lunch Program**

A Breakfast Program is offered. Students must notify their teacher the day before if they intend to eat breakfast the following morning to assist our food service provider with planning for adequate amounts. All students are eligible for free breakfast and lunch.

## **Building Use**

The school building and other facilities of Sterling Public Schools are intended to be of service not only to the school and its students, but also to the community at large. However, certain guidelines must be followed to make efficient use of our facilities. Guidelines and permission for use of the building after normal hours may be obtained through the school office. If any concerns arise from building use the privilege will be revoked.

## **Bullying/Harassment**

It is the policy of Sterling Public Schools to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment/bullying. The school district prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other victimization based on real or perceived race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and/or personality characteristics. School employees shall be responsible for promoting understanding and acceptance of, and assuring compliance with, state and federal laws and board policy and procedures governing harassment within the school setting. Students whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to the district's investigation procedure that may result in disciplinary action including expulsion. Students who believe they have suffered harassment shall report such matters in a timely manner to a teacher, a counselor, or a building administrator.

## **Preventing Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment, and Hazing**

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Preventing students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors is an important District goal. The Superintendent or designee shall develop and maintain a program that:

Fully implements and enforces each of the following Board policies:

a. 7.190, #9 Student Behavior. This policy prohibits students from engaging in hazing or any kind of aggressive behavior that does physical or psychological harm to another or any urging of other students to engage in such conduct; prohibited conduct includes any use of violence, force, noise, coercion, threats, intimidation, fear, harassment, bullying, hazing, or other comparable conduct.

b. 7.310, Restrictions on Publications and Written or Electronic Material. This policy prohibits students from: (i) accessing and/or distributing at school any written or electronic material, including material from the Internet, that will cause substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities, and (ii) creating and/or distributing written or electronic material, including Internet material and blogs, that causes substantial disruption to school operations or interferes with the rights of other students or staff members.

c. 7.20, Harassment of Students Prohibited. This policy prohibits any person from harassing or intimidating a student based upon a student's sex, color, race, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or other protected group status.

Full implementation of the above policies includes: (a) conducting a prompt and thorough investigation of alleged incidents of bullying, intimidation, or harassing behavior, (b) providing each student who violates one or more of these policies with appropriate consequences and remedial action, and (c) protecting students against retaliation for reporting such conduct.

1. Examines the appropriate steps to understand and rectify conditions that foster bullying, intimidation, and harassment; this contemplates taking action to eliminate or prevent these disruptive behaviors beyond traditional punitive disciplinary actions.

2. Includes bullying prevention and character instruction in all grades in accordance with State law and Board policy 6:60, Curriculum Content. This includes incorporating student social and emotional development into the District's educational program as required by State law and in alignment with Board policy 6:65, Student Social and Emotional Development.

3. Fully informs staff members of the District's goal to prevent students from engaging in bullying and the measures being used to accomplish it. This includes: (a) communicating the District's expectation – and the State law requirement – that teachers and other certificated employees maintain discipline, and (b) establishing a process for staff members to fulfill their obligation to



report alleged acts of bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other acts of actual or threatened violence.

4. Encourages all members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, to report alleged acts of bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other acts of actual or threatened violence.

5. Actively involves students' parents/guardians in the remediation of the behavior(s) of concern. This includes ensuring that all parents/guardians are notified, as required by State law, whenever their child engages in aggressive behavior.

6. Communicates the District's expectation that all students conduct themselves with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students. This includes a process for commending or acknowledging students for demonstrating appropriate behavior.

7. Annually communicates this policy to students and their parents/guardians. This includes annually disseminating information to all students and parents/guardians explaining the serious disruption caused by bullying, intimidation, or harassment and that these behaviors will be taken seriously and are not acceptable in any form.

8. Engages in ongoing monitoring that includes collecting and analyzing appropriate data on the nature and extent of bullying in the District's schools and, after identifying appropriate indicators, assesses the effectiveness of the various strategies, programs, and procedures and reports the results of this assessment to the Board along with recommendations to enhance effectiveness.

9. Complies with state and federal law and is in alignment with Board policies. This includes prompting the Board to update the policy beginning every 2 years after its initial adoption and filing this policy with the Illinois State Board of Education after the Board adopts or updates it.

10. Soliciting, encouraging, aiding, or engaging in hazing is prohibited. "Hazing" means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization, club, or athletic team whose members are or include other students. Students engaging in hazing will be subject to one or more of the following disciplinary actions: temporary suspension or removal from the extra-curricular activity, parent/guardian conference, and/or referral to the local law enforcement agency. Students engaging in hazing that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of another, may also be subject to an out-of-school suspension for up to 10 days and recommendation for expulsion.

## **Bus Rules and Regulations**

The administration shall assure school bus transportation operations are consistent and in compliance with School Board Policy and State Board of Education Rules and Regulations. The Principal will determine the disposition on bus violations. The action taken will assure due process, student rights and responsibilities, and communication to the parents and the bus company. Each violation will be processed after substantial and reliable evidence has been established. Each disciplinary action taken with a student violation will consider the evidence presented and observed, the student's disciplinary history of violations, and the natural consequence of the action leading to a positive behavior change.

The following process will be utilized:

On the first violation, a disciplinary action form will be given to the child to hand deliver to his/her parent. The parent may be called in severe cases.

The same procedure will be followed for a second violation. However, the action taken by the principal will be more severe and the parent may be called or asked to come to school for a conference.

On the third violation and subsequent violations, the principal shall have the right to suspend the student from riding the bus. A suspension may occur at the first or second violation depending upon the severity of the offense. A student who is suspended from riding the school bus and who does not have alternative transportation to school shall be allowed the opportunity to make up all missed work for equivalent academic credit. It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to notify the school that the student does not have alternative transportation to school.

Students are expected to follow all school rules when riding the school bus. A student may be suspended from riding the bus for up to 10 consecutive school days for engaging in gross disobedience or misconduct, including but not limited to, the following:

1. Violating any school rule or school district policy.
2. Willful injury or threat of injury to a bus driver or to another rider.
3. Willful and/or repeated defacement of the bus.
4. Repeated use of profanity.
5. Repeated willful disobedience of a directive from a bus driver or other supervisor.
6. Such other behavior as the building principal deems to threaten the safe operation of the bus and/or its occupants.

If a student is suspended from riding the bus for gross disobedience or misconduct on a bus, the School Board may suspend the student from riding the school bus for a period in excess of 10 days for safety reasons.

Disciplinary action may include discussion and guidance, withholding of privileges at school, parental involvement, monetary reimbursement for vandalism, or suspension depending upon the severity of the violation and the number of violations of the student. Before any disciplinary action is taken, the student will be allowed due process. All disciplinary action dispositions will be communicated to the parent.

School bus transportation is a service provided for eligible students in accordance with the School Code of Illinois and policies developed by the Board of Education of this school district. While in transit, school bus riders are under the jurisdiction of the school bus driver unless the school designates an adult to supervise the riders. It is recommended that all riders, parents or guardians of riders, and school personnel become thoroughly familiar with the following regulations governing school bus riders. The School Code of Illinois states that the school board shall have the power to suspend, or by regulations, to authorize the superintendent of the district or the principal of any school to suspend pupils guilty of gross disobedience or misconduct on the school bus from riding the school bus. In the event that this may become necessary, a hearing review will be held upon request.

To ensure the safety of your children, all school buses will have cameras on them. The actual taping will be audio and video.

### **Bus Safety Rules**

- Be on time at the designated bus stop. Help keep the bus on schedule.
- Stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus.
- Be careful in approaching the place where the bus stops. Do not move toward the bus until the bus has been brought to a complete stop.
- Students may be assigned seats.
- Do not leave your seat while the bus is in motion.
- Be alert to a danger signal from the driver.
- Remain in the bus in the event of a road emergency until the driver gives instructions.
- Keep hands and head inside the bus at all times after entering and until leaving the bus. Do not throw anything out of the bus window.
- Remember that unnecessary confusion diverts the driver's attention and could result in a serious accident.
- Be absolutely quiet when approaching a railroad crossing.
- Treat bus equipment as you would valuable furniture in your home. Never tamper with the bus or any of its equipment.
- Assist in keeping the bus safe and sanitary at all times.
- Carry no animals on the bus without permission of the school bus driver and the principal.
- Keep books, packages, coats and all other objects out of the aisles.
- Leave no books, lunches, or other articles on the bus.
- Be courteous to fellow students and the bus driver.
- Help look after the safety and comfort of small children.
- Do not ask the driver to stop at places other than the regular bus stop; he /she is not permitted to do this except by written authorization from the school principal.
- Observe safety precautions at discharge points. Where it is necessary to cross the highway, proceed to a point at least 10 feet in front of the bus on the right shoulder of the highway where traffic may be observed in both directions. Then wait for the signal from the bus driver permitting you to cross.

- Observe the same rules and regulations on other trips sponsored by the school as you observe between home and school. Respect the wishes of the chaperone appointed by the school.
- Smoking, as well as lighting of matches or lighters, will not be permitted on the bus.
- Possession of alcohol and/or illegal drugs is strictly against the law and is forbidden.

### **Cellular Telephones/Electronic Devices**

Engaging in any activity that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function is disruptive, including the use of cell phones. Students may carry a phone with them for emergency purposes, but it should be shut off during school hours. Unauthorized use of electronic devices is prohibited.

The use of electronic devices and other technology at school is a privilege, not a right. Students are prohibited from using electronic devices, except as provided herein. An electronic device includes, but is not limited to, the following: cell phone, smartphone, audio or video recording device, ipod®, ipad®, laptop computer, tablet computer or other similar electronic device.

Electronic devices may never be used in any manner that disrupts the educational environment, violates student conduct rules or violates the rights of others. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: (1) using the device to take photographs in locker rooms or bathrooms; (2) cheating; and (3) creating, sending, sharing, an indecent visual depiction or non-consensual dissemination of private sexual images (i.e., sexting).

The school and school district are not responsible for the loss, theft or damage to any electronic device brought to school.

Students in violation of this procedure are subject to the following consequences:

1. First offense – The device will be confiscated by school personnel. A verbal warning will be assigned. The student will receive the device back at the end of the day in the school office.
2. Second offense – The device will be confiscated. A detention will be assigned. The student's parent/guardian will be notified and required to pick up the device in the school office.
3. Third offense – The device will be confiscated. A detention will be assigned. The student's parent/guardian will be notified and required to pick up the device in the school office. Additionally, the student will be prohibited from bringing the device to school for the next 10 school days. If the student is found in possession of the device during this 10-day period, the student will be prohibited from bringing the device to school for the remainder of the school year. The student will also face consequences for insubordination.
4. Fourth and subsequent offense – The device will be confiscated. The student will be assigned a detention and will be prohibited from bringing the device to school for the remainder of the school year. The student's parent/guardian will be notified and required to pick up the device in the school office. The student will also face consequences for insubordination.

School officials may conduct an investigation or require a student to cooperate in an investigation if there is specific information about activity on the student's account on a social networking website that violates a school disciplinary rule or policy. In the course of an investigation, the student may be required to share the content that is reported in order to allow school officials to make a factual determination.

## **Change of Address**

It is very important you inform us immediately of any changes in your telephone number, address, or the person we should notify in case of an emergency. Please notify the office in advance of a planned move from our school. See the procedure for withdrawing students under that heading in this handbook.

## **Conduct**

### Hallway and Restroom Rules

Students are expected to ...

- Be polite, courteous, and cooperative.
- Recognize the rights of fellow students and school staff.
- Keep the hallways free of litter. You should place litter and refuse in the proper containers.
- Recognize the importance of building maintenance by not writing on any school property including walls, lockers, bulletin boards, water fountains, or restrooms.
- Be in academic work areas rather than in hallways during class.
- Be quiet while walking in the hallways.

### Lunchroom Rules

Students are expected to...

- Always use inside voices.
- Make minimal messes and clean up after themselves.

### Playground Rules

Students are expected to...

- No activity that is unsafe will be allowed. This includes playing on the ice.
- No pushing, wrestling, tackling, tripping, or fighting is allowed. Touching another student is allowed in games such as tag or touch football as long as the touching is not extreme.
- Students are not allowed to pick up, throw, or kick rocks.
- Students are to take turns on the playground equipment. Only one person at a time is allowed on a swing or a slide. No jumping from the playground equipment is allowed.
- Students must stay within the playground boundaries.

- No ice or snowball throwing.
- Students are to line up to enter the building immediately when the bell rings or the whistle is blown.
- All students are to obey the playground supervisors on duty.
- Courtesy should be given to all students and supervisors.
- During times of significant snowfall, students must wear snow boots AND snow pants in order to leave the blacktop and play in the snow.

### **Conferences and Report Cards**

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice during the school year. Teachers and parents are encouraged to request additional conferences at any time during the year, and to contact one another via email and phone. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to access Sterling Public Schools' online student information system (Skyward) to monitor their child's attendance records, discipline records, lunch account, as well as teachers' course calendars and gradebooks for students in grades 3-5. All K-5 report cards will be available through Skyward at the end of each nine-week quarter. Please contact your child's school office if you would like to request a paper copy, or if you need assistance with your Skyward account.

### **Counseling**

Counselors are available to help support students, parents, and teachers in enhancing student growth in a developmentally responsive manner. Counseling services and activities may include individual and group counseling, large group guidance lessons, and parent and teacher consultation, among other services aimed at increasing student achievement. With some exceptions, the student's right to confidentiality is respected. It is also important to note that school counseling services can be a stepping stone; but are not intended as a substitute for psychological counseling, diagnosis, or medication. If a family is interested in these services, the counselors can help families get in contact with additional resources that may help meet their needs. Our schools use positive behavioral supports with consistent expectations for student behavior. The goals of the positive behavioral supports are to decrease behavior referrals, which result in increased academic success. Counselor and administration interventions may be implemented after 3 office referrals. Examples of these interventions can include a meeting with administrators and/or counselors or placing the student into "Check In Check Out" among other interventions. Students needing more intensive interventions may require a Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan. All interventions are aimed at social academic success at school.

## **Crisis Plan**

Each school within Sterling Public Schools has developed a crisis response plan. This plan is on file in case of a dangerous circumstance or situation. The staff reviews this plan frequently, ensuring understanding and making revisions, if necessary.

## **Emergency Pick Up Site**

Circumstances may occur at a Sterling Public School or the surrounding area that requires parents to pick up their students in a formalized, controlled release. The process of controlled release is called reunification and may be necessary due to weather, a power outage, hazmat or if a crisis occurs at school. Reunification is a process that protects both the safety of the student and provides for an accountable change of custody from the school to a recognized custodial parent or guardian at an alternate location. Parents and guardians will not be allowed entrance to the school building. In the event of a controlled release, parents/guardians need to bring a form of Photo ID to the designated site, which will be communicated to families.

## **Deliveries**

Any special gifts, flowers or balloons sent to a student, will be kept in the office until the end of the day. The student will be notified of its arrival and may pick item(s) up in the office after school.

## **Discipline**

Our staff desires for the school to run smoothly and for everyone to get along. This is not possible without some rules and policies.

Our goals in the area of discipline include:

- Helping students develop self-control, respect, and to manage their own behavior.
- Helping students improve classroom performance through proper behavior during instruction.
- Improving overall school discipline through instruction.
- Maintaining a positive school atmosphere.

Maintaining an orderly and secure environment for our students is a crucial part of providing quality education. The classroom teacher will maintain discipline. Teachers will inform their students of classroom rules and routines and the necessary consequences for not complying with those rules. Students will be sent to the principal or his/her designee for disciplinary action after the teacher has first instituted steps to change and/or stop the disrupting behavior. Any student involved in physical fighting, disrespect or insubordination toward staff and adults in the building will be sent immediately to the principal or his/her designee.

The principal or his/her designee will determine the appropriate consequences. This may include, but is not limited to, a warning, reteaching of expectations, loss of privileges, time-out in the office, detention, suspension, parent call and/or a request for a parent conference.

In cases of serious disobedience or misconduct, which is dangerous to the safety of the student or others, parent(s) will be contacted immediately to arrange a conference. In-school or out-of-school suspensions may be given until such time as the conference is held and a disciplinary action determined. In these cases, the first three steps of the disciplinary action may be waived.

### Student Behavior (Board Policy 7.190)

*This policy becomes effective and replaces the current policy on Student Discipline on the first student attendance day of the start of the school year.*

### Student Behavior

The goals and objectives of this policy are to provide effective discipline practices that: (1) ensure the safety and dignity of students and staff; (2) maintain a positive, weapons-free, and drug-free learning environment; (3) keep school property and the property of others secure; (4) address the causes of a student's misbehavior and provide opportunities for all individuals involved in an incident to participate in its resolution; and (5) teach students positive behavioral skills to become independent, self-disciplined citizens in the school community and society.

### When and Where Conduct Rules Apply

A student is subject to disciplinary action for engaging in prohibited student conduct, as described, in the section with that name below, whenever the student's conduct is reasonably related to school or school activities, including, but not limited to:

1. On, or within sight of, school grounds before, during, or after school hours and at any other time;
2. Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event, or any activity, or event which bears a reasonable relationship to school;
3. Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function or event; or
4. Anywhere, if the conduct interferes with, disrupts, or adversely affects the school environment, school operations, or an educational function, including but limited to, conduct that may reasonably be considered to: (a) be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member, or (b) endanger the health or safety of students, staff, or school property.

### Prohibited Student Conduct

The school administration is authorized to discipline students for gross disobedience or misconduct, including, but not limited to, the following:



1. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling tobacco or nicotine materials, including without limitation electronic-cigarettes.
2. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling alcoholic beverages. Students who are under the influence of an alcoholic beverage are not permitted to attend school or school functions and are treated as though they had alcohol in their possession.
3. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling, or offering for sale:
  - a. Any illegal drug, controlled substance, or cannabis (including medical cannabis, marijuana and hashish).
  - b. Any anabolic steroid unless it is being administered in accordance with a physician or licensed practitioner's prescription.
  - c. Any performance-enhancing substance on the Illinois High School Association's most current banned substance list unless administered in accordance with a physician or licensed practitioner's prescription.
  - d. Any prescription drug when not prescribed for the student by a physician or licensed practitioner, or when used in a manner inconsistent with the prescription or prescribing physician or licensed practitioner's instructions. The use or possession of medical cannabis, even by a student for whom medical cannabis has been prescribed, is prohibited.
  - e. Any inhalant, regardless of whether it contains an illegal drug or controlled substance: (a) that a student believes is, or represents to be capable of, causing intoxication, hallucination, excitement, or dulling of the brain or nervous system; or (b) about which the student engaged in behavior that would lead a reasonable person to believe that the student intended the inhalant to cause intoxication, hallucination, excitement, or dulling of the brain or nervous system. The prohibition in this section does not apply to a student's use of asthma or other legally prescribed inhalant medication.
  - f. Any substance inhaled, injected, smoked, consumed, or otherwise ingested or absorbed with the intention of causing a physiological or psychological change in the body, including without limitation, pure caffeine in tablet or powdered form.
  - g. "Look-alike" or counterfeit drugs, including a substance that is not prohibited by this policy, but one (a) that a student believes to be, or represents to be, an illegal drug, controlled substance, or other substance that is prohibited by this policy, (b) about which a student engaged in behavior that would lead a reasonable person to believe that the student expressly or impliedly represented to be an illegal drug, controlled substance, or other substance that is prohibited by this policy.
  - h. Drug paraphernalia, including devices that are or can be used to: (a) ingest, inhale, or inject cannabis or controlled substances into the body; and (b) grow, process, store, or conceal cannabis or controlled substances.
4. Students who are under the influence of any prohibited substance are not permitted to attend school or school functions and are treated as though they had the prohibited substance, as applicable, in their possession.
5. Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring a "weapon" as that term is defined in the Weapons section of this policy, or violating the Weapons section of this policy.

6. Using or possessing an electronic paging device. Using a cellular telephone, video recording device, or other electronic device that is otherwise not banned by this policy, in any manner that disrupts the educational environment or violates the right of others, including using the device to take photographs in locker rooms or bathrooms, cheat, signal others, or otherwise violate student conduct rules. Prohibited conduct specifically includes, without limitation, creating, sending, sharing, viewing, receiving, or possessing an indecent visual depiction of oneself or another person through the use of a computer, electronic communication device, or cellular phone. Unless otherwise banned under this policy, all electronic devices must be kept powered off and out of sight during the regular school day unless: (a) the supervising teacher grants permission, (b) use of the device is provided in a student's IEP, or (c) it is used during the student's lunch period, it is needed in an emergency that threatens the safety of students, staff, or other individuals.
7. Using or possessing a laser pointer unless under a staff member's supervision and in the context of instruction.
8. Disobeying directives from staff members or school officials and/or rules and regulations governing student conduct. Examples of disobeying staff directives include refusing a District staff member's request to stop, present school identification, or submit to a search.
9. Engaging in academic dishonesty, including cheating, intentionally plagiarizing, wrongfully giving or receiving help during an academic examination, altering report cards, and wrongfully obtaining test copies or scores.
10. Engaging in hazing or any kind of aggressive behavior that does physical or psychological harm to a staff person, another student, or urging other students to engage in such conduct. Prohibited conduct specifically includes, without limitation, any use of violence, intimidation, force, noise, coercion, threats, stalking, harassment, sexual harassment, public humiliation, theft or destruction of property, hazing, bullying, bullying using a school computer or a school computer network, or other comparable conduct.
11. Engaging in any sexual activity, including without limitation, offensive touching, sexual harassment, indecent exposure (including mooning), and sexual assault. This does not include the non-disruptive: (a) expression of gender or sexual orientation or preference, or (b) display of affection during non-instructional time.
12. Teen dating violence, as described in Board policy 7.185, Teen Dating Violence Prohibited.
13. Causing or attempting to cause damage to, or stealing or attempting to steal, school property or another person's personal property.
14. Entering school property or a school facility without proper authorization.
15. In the absence of a reasonable belief that an emergency exists, calling emergency responders (such as calling 911); signaling or setting off alarms or signals indicating the presence of an emergency; or indicating the presence of a bomb or explosive device on school grounds, school bus, or at any school activity.
16. Being absent without a recognized excuse. State law and Board policy regarding truancy control will be utilized for chronic and habitual truants.

17. Being involved with any public school fraternity, sorority, or secret society, by: (a) being a member; (b) promising to join; (c) pledging to become a member; or (d) soliciting any other person to join, promise to join, or be pledged to become a member.
18. Being involved in gangs or gang-related activities, including the display of gang symbols or paraphernalia.
19. Violating any criminal law, including but not limited to, assault, battery, arson, theft, gambling, eavesdropping, vandalism, and hazing.
20. Making an explicit threat on an internet website against a school employee, a student, or any school-related personnel if the internet website through which the threat was made is a site that was accessible within the school at the time the threat was made or was available to third parties who worked or studied within the school grounds at the time the threat was made, and the threat could be reasonably interpreted as threatening to the safety and security of the threatened individual because of his or her duties or employment status or status as a student in the school.
21. Operating an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) or drone for any purpose on school grounds or at any school event unless granted permission by the Superintendent or designee.
22. Engaging in any activity, on or off campus, that interferes with, disrupts, or adversely affects the school environment, school operations, or an educational function, including but not limited to conduct that may reasonably be considered to: (a) be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member; or (b) endanger the health or safety of students, staff, or school property.

For purposes of this policy, the term “possession” includes having control, custody, or care, currently or in the past, of an object or substance, including situations in which the item is (a) on the student’s person, or (b) contained in another item belonging to, or under the control of, the student, such as in the student’s clothing, backpack, or automobile, or (c) in a school’s student locker, desk, or other school property, or (d) any other location on school property or at a school-sponsored event.

Efforts, including the use of positive interventions and supports, shall be made to deter students, while at school or a school-related event, from engaging in aggressive behavior that may reasonably produce physical or physiological harm to someone else. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the parent/guardian of a student who engages in aggressive behavior is notified of the incident. The failure to provide such notification does not limit the Board’s authority to impose discipline, including suspension or expulsion, for such behavior.

No disciplinary action shall be taken against any student that is based totally or in part on the refusal of the student’s parent/guardian to administer or consent to the administration of psychotropic or psychostimulant medication to the student.

### Disciplinary Measures

School officials shall limit the number and duration of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions to the greatest extent practicable, and, where practicable and reasonable, shall consider forms of non-exclusionary discipline before using out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. School personnel shall not advise or encourage students to drop out voluntarily due to behavioral or academic difficulties. Potential disciplinary measures include, without limitation, any of the following:

1. Notifying parent(s)/guardian(s).
2. Disciplinary conference.
3. Withholding of privileges.
4. Temporary removal from classroom.
5. Return of property or restitution for lost, stolen, or damaged property.
6. In-school suspension. The Building Principal or a designee shall ensure that the student is properly supervised.
7. After-school study or Saturday study provided the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) have been notified. If transportation arrangements cannot be agreed upon, an alternative disciplinary measure must be used. The student must be supervised by the detaining teacher or the Building Principal or a designee.
8. Community service with local public and nonprofit agencies that enhances community efforts to meet human, educational, environmental, or public safety needs. The District will not provide transportation. School administration shall use this option only as an alternative to another disciplinary measure giving the student and/or parent/guardian the choice.
9. Seizure of contraband; confiscation and temporary retention of personal property that was used to violate this policy or school disciplinary rules.
10. Suspension of bus riding privileges in accordance with Board policy 7.220, Bus Conduct.
11. Out-of school suspension from school and all school-sponsored events in accordance with Board policy 7.200, Suspension Procedures. A suspended student may also be restricted from being on school grounds and at school activities.
12. Expulsion from school and all school-sponsored activities for a definite time period not to exceed 2 calendar years in accordance with Board policy 7.210, Expulsion Procedures. A student who has been expelled may also be restricted from being on school grounds and at school activities.
13. Transfer to an alternative program if the student is expelled or otherwise qualifies for the transfer under State law. The transfer shall be in the manner provided in Article 13A or 13B of the School Code.
14. Notifying juvenile authorities or other law enforcement whenever the conduct involves criminal activity, including but not limited to, illegal drugs (controlled substances), look-alikes, alcohol, or weapons, or in other circumstances as authorized by the reciprocal reporting agreement between the District and local law enforcement agencies.

The above list of disciplinary measures is a range of options that will not always be applicable in every case. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to avoid suspending or expelling a student because behavioral interventions, other than a suspension and expulsion, will not be appropriate and available, and the only reasonable and practical way to resolve the threat and/or address the disruption is a suspension or expulsion.

Corporal punishment is prohibited. Corporal punishment is defined as slapping, paddling, or prolonged maintenance of students in physically painful positions, or intentional infliction of bodily harm. Corporal punishment does not include reasonable force as needed to maintain safety for students, staff, or other persons, or for the purpose of self-defense or defense of property.

### Weapons

A student who is determined to have brought one of the following objects to school, any school-sponsored activity or event, or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school shall be expelled for a period of at least one calendar year, but not more than 2 calendar years.

1. A firearm, meaning any gun, rifle, shotgun, or weapon as defined by Section 921 of Title 18, of the United States Code (18 U.S.C. § 921), firearm as defined in Section 1.1 of the Firearm Owners Identification Card Act (430 ILCS 65/), or firearm as defined in Section 24-1 of the Criminal Code of 1961 (720 ILCS 5/24-1).
2. A knife, brass knuckles, or other knuckle weapon regardless of its composition, a billy club, or any other object if used or attempted to be used to cause bodily harm, including “look alikes” of any firearm as defined above.

The expulsion requirement under either paragraph 1 or 2 above may be modified by the Superintendent, and the Superintendent’s determination may be modified by the Board on a case-by-case basis. The Superintendent or designee may grant an exception to this policy, upon the prior request of an adult supervisor, for students in theater, cooking, ROTC, martial arts, and similar programs, whether or not school-sponsored, provided the item is not equipped, nor intended, to do bodily harm.

This policy’s prohibitions concerning weapons apply regardless of whether: (1) a student is licensed to carry a concealed firearm, or (2) the Board permits visitors, who are licensed to carry a concealed firearm, to store a firearm in a locked vehicle in a school parking area.

### Re-engagement of Returning Students

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain a process to facilitate the re-engagement of students who are returning from an out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or an alternative school setting. The goal of re-engagement shall be to support the student’s ability to be successful in school following a period of exclusionary discipline and shall include the

opportunity for students who have been suspended to complete or make up work for equivalent academic credit.

### Discipline Plans for the Classroom

Your child's teacher will establish classroom rules. You may want to ask your child's teacher about his/her rules during Parent-Teacher Conferences. Students are obligated to do their homework assignments on a regular basis. Students who fail to do their assignments may lose certain privileges.

### Behavioral Interventions

Behavioral interventions shall be used with students to promote and strengthen desirable behaviors and reduce identified inappropriate behaviors. The School Board will establish and maintain a committee to develop, implement, and monitor procedures on the use of behavioral interventions for children.

### Discipline of Special Education Students

The District shall comply with the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the Illinois State Board of Education's Special Education rules when disciplining special education students. No special education student shall be expelled if the student's particular act of gross disobedience or misconduct is a manifestation of his or her disability.

### **Dress**

In order to maintain an effective learning environment, school clothing should be neat, clean, and appropriate. Gym shoes are needed for physical education classes. No chains on pants or jeans should be worn to school. Hats should not be worn in the building unless for spirit days. Any problems involving dress are handled on an individual basis.

### **Dropping Off and Picking Up Students**

To ensure the safety of all children, please have them cross the street only at crosswalks/corners. Crossing guards are on duty before and after school. Please do not allow your child to exit/enter the car while stopped in the middle of the street.

### **Emergency School Closing**

#### School Canceled/School Closing Early

Announcements of school closings and early closings are communicated to families in the following ways:

- Posted on the Sterling Public Schools website at [sterlingpublicschools.org](http://sterlingpublicschools.org)

- Phone and email notifications from the District's automated system
- Text notifications at [saukvalley.com](http://saukvalley.com)
- Radio stations: WSDR (12.40 AM), WSSQ (94.3 FM), or WLLT (107.7 FM)
- TV stations: Channel 6 (KWQC-TV), Channel 8 (WQAD-TV)

Announcements of school closings will be made as early as possible. We urge you not to call the school or the District Office for this information. Please establish a plan for emergency school closings with your children and child care providers. By planning ahead, you will ensure that your child is properly cared for without the anxiety caused by trying to contact the school when phone lines are busy.

Please visit the following website for more information about inclement weather - <http://www.sterlingpublicschools.org/index.php/students-parents/inclement-weather>

### **Entering or Leaving the Building**

1. Students are to enter and exit the building in a quick, but orderly manner. Please try to help us keep the building neat and clean. Crossing guards will be available before and after school. Students will be allowed in the building doors are open (Franklin and Jefferson 7:50 AM; Washington and Lincoln 7:40 AM).
2. Students shall not enter the building during their recess period unless permission from a supervisor has been granted. Unless a student is hurt or sick, no other student may accompany a student entering the building.
3. Students should enter the building when the temperature or wind chill factor is below 15 degrees. In these cases, students should wait indoors until the first bell. They may then enter their classrooms.
4. When dismissed, students riding the bus must board their respective buses as they arrive on school grounds.
5. Occasionally, teachers may keep students after school to finish class work or for disciplinary reasons. If a student will be kept after school for longer than ten minutes or he/she rides a bus, arrangements will be made ahead of time by the teacher.
6. Students are not allowed on the playground after school without adult supervision.

## **Equal Educational Opportunities**

Equal educational opportunities shall be available for all students without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, ethnicity, language barrier, religious beliefs, physical and mental handicap or disability, or economic and social conditions, or actual or potential marital or parental status. Any student may file a discrimination grievance by using the Uniform Grievance Procedure.

## **Excuses for Participation in Recess/P.E.**

All students will be expected to participate in outdoor recess activities and physical education classes unless the school has a written note from a doctor requesting that the child not go outside or participate in physical education classes. In such cases, the child will report either to the office or their classroom during recess and/or P.E. class periods.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips are planned as an additional educational experience for your child. During registration, parents are given the option to give consent for students to participate in field trips. Permission is necessary for your child to be included. You will always receive advanced notice and information about upcoming field trips. Occasionally, teachers will contact parents to request assistance in supervising a field trip. The classroom and/or the PTO raise funds for field trips. Parents may also be asked to contribute toward the cost of the trip.

## **Health and Medication**

Parents should bring special health concerns to the attention of teachers, the school nurse, and/or the school office personnel. The nurse is available for students as needed for emergencies, administering medications, and willingly discussing health concerns with parents/guardians. It is extremely important to keep the emergency information sheets accurate and complete with the person to be called in case of an emergency, physician's name, and child's physical condition (such as epilepsy, asthma, allergies, etc.).

### **Administering Medicine to Students (Policy 7.270)**

Taking medication during school hours or during school-related activities is prohibited unless it is necessary for a student's health and well-being. When a student's licensed health care provider and parent/guardian believe that it is necessary for the student to take medication during school hours or school-related activities, the parent/guardian must request that the school dispense the medication to the child by completing a "School Medication Authorization Form." No school or district employee is allowed to administer to any student, or supervise a student's self-administration of, any prescription or non-prescription medication until a completed and signed School Medication Authorization Form is submitted by the student's parent/guardian. No



student is allowed to possess or consume any prescription or non-prescription medication on school grounds or at a school-related function other than as provided for in this procedure.

### Asthma

The State Board of Education, in consultation with statewide organizations with expertise in asthma, developed a model asthma episode emergency response protocol. All public school districts in Illinois must adopt an asthma episode emergency response protocol that includes the components of the State Board's model. Sterling Public School's Asthma Action Plan (AAP) is available in your child's school nurse office. If your child's doctor has diagnosed him or her with asthma, the school district must annually request an AAP. The AAP must be completed by the child's healthcare provider. For more information, please contact your school nurse.

### Self-Administration of Medication

A student may possess an epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen®) and/or an asthma inhaler prescribed for use at the student's discretion, provided the student's parent/guardian has completed and signed an Authorization for Student Self-Medication Form a School Medication Authorization Form. The school and district shall incur no liability, except for willful and wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from a student's self-administration of medication or epinephrine auto-injector or the storage of any medication by school personnel. A student's parent/guardian must agree to indemnify and hold harmless the school district and its employees and agents, against any claims, except a claim based on willful and wanton conduct, arising out of a student's self-administration of an epinephrine auto-injector and/or asthma inhaler, or the storage of any medication by school personnel.

### Vision Screening

Individuals conducting vision screening tests shall give a child's parent or guardian written notification, before the vision screening is conducted, that states, "Vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Your child is not required to undergo this vision screening if an optometrist or ophthalmologist has completed and signed a report form indicating that an examination has been administered within the previous 12 months." (Section 27-8.1 of the School Code)

## **Homework**

Homework is assigned as an extension of our daily school program. Examples of homework assignments your child may have are:

- Make-up work after an absence.
- Using individual math or sight word flash cards.
- Extra practice of basic skills in math, language arts, or reading.
- Collecting or reading material for writing reports.

- Gathering news and other current information from newspapers and magazines.
- Special projects.

Students are obligated to do their homework assignments on a regular basis. Students who fail to do their assignments may lose certain privileges.

### **Instrumental Music**

If a student participates in band or orchestra, the student should only bring their instruments when requested by the instrumental music teacher, and these instruments should be kept in the designated area.

### **Internet Access**

Schools have the ability to enhance your child's education through the use of the Internet. The Internet offers vast, diverse, and unique resources. The District's goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. Your authorization is needed before your child may use this resource.

Please read and discuss the Authorization for Electronic Network Access policy with your child that is available during Registration. If you agree to allow your child to have Internet access, complete the online registration forms by checking the box to allow your student access.

### **iPad's**

Each student is issued an ipad for school use at the beginning of the year. Families are responsible for purchasing or denying insurance to cover accidents and repairs. If families fail to purchase insurance, families will be billed for lost or damaged devices, including screens, cases, and/or charging systems. Families who do purchase insurance will not be charged for repair costs.

### **Library**

We have an exceptional library which houses the school's book collection. All students are encouraged to check out books.

Books may be kept for as long as two weeks and returned on or before the due date. If a book is overdue, a notice is given to the classroom teacher.

A book is considered lost if overdue for longer than one month. You will be asked to pay for the replacement book. If a lost book is later found and returned in good condition, a refund will be made. Students who return books that are damaged will be issued a bill for the cost of the replacement book.

We ask for everyone's help in the proper care and handling of our books: no writing or marking in the books, having clean hands and no food or drink when reading, and keeping books in a safe place. With everyone's cooperation, we can continue to provide our students with a selection of quality books and enjoyable reading experiences.

### **Lockers**

Students are issued a locker at the beginning of the school year. Please make sure that lockers are kept clean throughout the school year. Students are not allowed to place stickers or other items on the door or the inside of the locker itself. Please note that student lockers at the elementary level do not lock. Therefore, students are discouraged from storing money or expensive items in their locker. The school is not responsible for stolen, lost or broken property.

### **Lost and Found**

Lost and found articles are turned into the office and displayed in the hallway outside the office. Wallets, jewelry, and other valuable items are kept in the office. Have your child check the "Lost and Found" to recover lost items or to turn in articles that are found. Students are responsible for his/her personal property.

### **Medicaid Reimbursement Notice**

Medicaid reimbursement is a source of federal funds approved by Congress to help school districts maintain and improve special education services. Therapy and diagnostic services provided to your child are partially reimbursable. Unless you object in writing, Bi-County/Sterling Schools will claim Medicaid/KidCare reimbursement for services provided. These claims will have no impact on your ability to receive Medicaid funding either now or anytime in the future. If you do not object to this release of information related to Medicaid claims for your child, do nothing.

### **Messages to Students**

Students are allowed to use the school's telephone only for emergency purposes. Your child's teacher or office personnel will determine if the call falls in the realm of an emergency based upon their judgment of the situation.

Unless it is an emergency, please avoid calling to leave a message for your child during the school day. This results in interrupting the classroom and loss of instructional time. If it should be necessary to contact your child because you are picking him/her up after school and you do not want him/her to ride the bus, please inform our office prior to 2:00 p.m. Please remember that we allow students to use the school phone only in an emergency and this is at the

discretion of his/her teacher or by office personnel. Please try to take care of family procedures prior to the start of each school day.

### **Necessary Use of Force by a Staff Member**

Staff members may apply sufficient physical force necessary to maintain or restore order or safety in the school building, on the campus, and at school sponsored activities.

### **Non-Custodial Parents' Rights to Information**

All pertinent information regarding the progress of a child will be shared with non-custodial parents as it would with custodial parents. Federal law (Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act) and state law (Illinois Student School Records Act) mandate that non-custodial parents receive the same consideration as custodial parents and should receive such information as:

- Report cards
- Statewide test results
- Invitations to parent-teacher conferences
- Access to child's records
- Other information shared with the custodial parent

The only way in which a non-custodial parent may be denied access to this information is if there is a court order specifically prohibiting the non-custodial parent's contact with the school. The request from a custodial parent in itself is not enough to deny access to a non-custodial parent.

### **Open Enrollment Requests**

Open enrollment requests need to be submitted through the parent link on the Sterling Public Schools website. Requests need to be received by August 1, 2023. Open enrollment decisions will be made before the start of the new school year. Parents will be notified by phone of the decision.

### **Parental Calls**

If you wish to talk to a staff member, please call the school office. During the school day, our office staff will transfer your call to the voice mailbox of the staff member to return your call. From 4:00 P.M. until 8:00 A.M., an answering machine is available for the placement of messages to the staff or to inform the school as to your child's attendance.

## **Parental Request for Teachers**

Students are assigned to next year's classes prior to the start of the school year. We try to balance out each class by leadership, ability, gender, numbers, etc. If a parent is wishing to request a specific teacher for their child to be assigned to or not to be assigned to, they may contact the principal's office via mail, email, or in-person by May 1, 2023. It is not possible to honor all requests. The final decision on all student placements rests with the principal.

## **Parties**

Class celebrations are planned and organized in cooperation with the PTO. If you are interested in becoming a room mother/father, please contact the school office. Parents may be asked to contribute drinks, snacks, paper supplies, etc. or organize games for classroom celebrations.

Birthday invitations should not be distributed at school unless there is an invitation for every child in the classroom. Children often enjoy being able to celebrate their birthdays at school. As a safety precaution, treats that are shared at school must be "store bought" or pre-packaged. Homemade treats will not be allowed.

## **Personal Property at School**

We ask that children not bring valuable property such as handheld electronic games, collectibles, toys, trading cards, or other such objects to school unless their teacher has given them permission. Items that are brought from home should be clearly marked so they can be easily identified. The school is not responsible for stolen, lost or broken property.

## **Pesticide Application Notification**

At times it may be necessary for the school district to apply pesticides to school buildings or school grounds. If you wish to be notified of pesticide application, please register with the principal of your school.

## **Positive Behavior Interventionist and Supports (PBIS)**

PBIS is a proactive systems approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success. As a Response to Intervention model, PBIS applies a three-tiered system of support, and a problem-solving process to enhance the capacity of schools to effectively educate all students. We are a PBIS district and have a behavior matrix in place to assist students in making positive choices.

## **Promotion and Retention**

It is the school's intention to strive to ensure that students meet district goals and objectives and can perform at the expected grade levels for their grades before being promoted.

Decisions to promote, retain, or remediate students in any class shall be based on successful completion of the curriculum, attendance, test performance, individual needs, and parent input.

No student shall be promoted to the next grade level for age or any other social reasons not related to the student's academic performance.

Consultation with the parent/guardian throughout the school year will be maintained and documented when educational progress is not satisfactory. The final decision regarding the need for supplemental education outside the regular school day or school year and the student's promotion to the next grade shall be the responsibility of the building principal.

## **PTO**

The P.T.O. is an important part of our total educational program, and plays a critical role in connecting our parents to our school. You are encouraged to become involved in this organization.

We encourage and welcome parent volunteers to help in the lunchroom, the playground, classrooms, special classes, the library, and in the computer lab. If you are interested in helping at the school on a volunteer basis, please contact the office or your child's teacher. Volunteers are required by School Code law to complete a form for background checks.

## **Public Relations**

Public Relations, Radio, Television, Newspapers, Websites, Social Media

Pictures of Unnamed Students

Students may occasionally appear in photographs and videotapes taken by school staff members, other students, or other individuals authorized by the Building Principal. The school may use these pictures, without identifying the students, in various publications, including the school yearbook, school newspaper, and school website. No consent or notice is needed or will be given before the school uses pictures of unnamed students taken while they are at school or school-related activity.

Pictures of Named Students

Many times, however, the school will want to identify a student in a school picture. School officials want to acknowledge those students who participate in a school activity or deserve special recognition. Parents must notify the school principal if they do not want their child's name or picture released to the media for public recognition of student achievements, class projects or promotional purposes. A parent permission form is available during registration.

## State Report Cards

District and individual school State Report Cards are available at [www.sterlingpublicschools.org](http://www.sterlingpublicschools.org)

Paper copies are available at each school in English and Spanish.

## Sex Offender Information

Individuals may obtain information concerning sex offenders at the Illinois State Police website [www.isp.state.il.us](http://www.isp.state.il.us). Information may also be obtained from any police department or sheriff's department.

## **Recess**

All children are expected to go outside during recess times unless it is raining or below 15 degrees with the wind chill. During cold weather, students should be dressed warmly, including hats, scarves, and mittens/gloves. Please ensure that your child has boots during wet or snowy weather.

## **Release of Students During a School Day**

Sometimes it is difficult to schedule dental, orthodontic, or medical appointments after school. Requests for early dismissal for such appointments will be approved. Please send a note to the office indicating this request along with the date and time of appointment

For your child's protection, we require that you sign your child in and out of school through the school office. No student will be released unless picked up and signed out by an approved adult. Your child should also check in at the office upon returning to school, if it is on the same day. If someone other than a parent or legal guardian picks up the student for an appointment, we require a note giving us permission to release the student to that person, or that person must be on your emergency contact pick up list.

## **Safety Drills**

Fire drills, tornado drills, bus evacuation drills, as well as dangerous intruder drills are held regularly during the year. Directions for exiting the school building are posted in each classroom. Students are expected to exit the building in a safe and orderly manner during all fire and evacuation drills.

## **School Admissions**

All children entering kindergarten must have reached their fifth birthday on or before the 1st day of September, as specified in the School Code of Illinois.

Students enrolling in the Sterling School District for the first time must present a birth certificate, or other proof of identity of age, two different proofs of residency, proof of immunizations, and the required physical exam (Grades K, 6, 9) and dental exams (Grades K, 2, 6).

### **School Security**

In order to provide increased security and ensure a safe, secure learning environment for our students, all building doors will be locked during the school day. A security camera and “buzz-in” system are at the front doors of all Sterling Public School buildings. Visitors will be required to “buzz-in” for admission to the buildings, and then must stop in the main office to register and get a visitor’s pass.

### **School Visitation**

Visitors are required to register in the office. Special invitations will be extended to parents on certain occasions for programs and assemblies.

For your student’s safety, upon your first visit to Sterling Public Schools, you will be required to provide government-issued identification in the main office. Any staff member may request identification from any person on school grounds or in any school building: refusal to provide such information is a criminal act. The Building Principal or designee shall seek the immediate removal of any person who: (1) refuses to provide requested identification, (2) interferes with, disrupts, or threatens to disrupt any activity or the learning environment, (3) or engages in activity in violation of School Board Policy 8.30, Conduct on School Property.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment of students is prohibited. Students, who believe they are victims of sexual harassment or have witnessed sexual harassment, are encouraged to report the incident to the school administration. Students may choose to report to a person of the student’s same sex. An allegation that one student was sexually harassed by another student shall be referred to the Building Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students for appropriate action. (Policy 7.20 Students)

### **Social Networking**

The use of social networking sites has become a common form of communication for many students. Unfortunately, there have been instances throughout the state in which students’ online posts on social sites have created a substantial disruption to the school environment.



Be advised that postings that include violence against others, bullying, harassment, and intimidation, alcohol, and/or substance abuse, weapon usage, and any other content that violates the student code of conduct could result in disciplinary action.

The school may not request or require a student to provide a password or other related account information to gain access to the student's account or profile on a social networking website. The school may conduct an investigation or require a student to cooperate in an investigation if there is specific information about activity on the student's account that violates a school disciplinary rule or policy. As part of the investigation, a student may be required to share the content that is reported in order to make a factual determination.

### **Special Services**

The following special services may be available to students: speech therapy, hearing and vision screening, Title I reading, bilingual services, school counseling, social work, and special education services. At some time during the school year, it may be beneficial for teachers and parents to request the help of these specially trained people. Your written permission is needed for some of these services.

### **Student Pictures**

Once in the fall as well as the spring, all students will have the opportunity to have their pictures taken. The PTO handles this service. Advance notification of picture day and price lists will be given to parents and students.

### **Student Records**

The District will maintain two sets of school records for each student: a permanent record and a temporary record.

The permanent record includes:

- Basic identifying information
- Academic transcripts
- Attendance records
- Accident and health records
- Information pertaining to release of this record
- Honors and awards
- School-sponsored activities and athletics

The temporary record includes:

- Family background
- Intelligence and aptitude scores
- Psychological reports

- Achievement test results
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- Honors and awards
- Teacher anecdotal records
- Disciplinary information, including information regarding any punishment for misconduct involving drugs, weapons, or bodily harm to another
- Special education files
- Verified reports or information from non-educational persons
- Verified information of clear relevance to the student education
- Information pertaining to the release of records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Illinois Student Records Act afford parents/legal guardians and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's educational records. They are:

- The right to inspect and copy the student's education records within 10 business days of the day the District receives a request for access.

Students less than 18 years of age have the right to inspect and copy their permanent record. Parents/legal guardians or 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(s)/legal guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the record(s) may be inspected. The District charges \$.15 per page for copying but no one will be denied their right to copies of their records for inability to pay costs.

The rights contained in this section are denied to any person whom an order of protection has been entered concerning a student (105 ILCS 5/10-22.3c, 105 ILCS 10/5a, and 750 ILCS 60/214(b) (15).

- The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, irrelevant, or improper.

Parents/guardians or eligible students may ask the District to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate, misleading, irrelevant, or improper. They should write the school principal or records custodian, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify the reason.

If the District decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or eligible student, the District will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the eligible student of the decision and advise him/her of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

- The right to permit disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that the FERPA or Illinois School Student Records Act authorizes disclosure without consent.

Disclosure is permitted without consent to school officials with legitimate educational or administrative interest. 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 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 attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent(s)/guardian(s) or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official 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, the District discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student has enrolled or intends to enroll as well as to any person as specifically required by state or federal law. Before information is released to individuals described in this paragraph, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive prior written notice of the nature and substance of the information, and an opportunity to inspect, copy, and challenge such records.

The right to challenge school student records does not apply to: (1) academic grades of their child, and (2) references to expulsions or out-of-school suspensions, if the challenge is made at the time the student's school student records are forwarded to another school to which the student is transferring.

Disclosure is also permitted without consent to: any person for research, statistical reporting or planning, provided that no student or parent(s)/guardian(s) can be identified; any person named in a court order; appropriate persons if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons; and juvenile authorities when necessary for the discharge of their official duties who request information before adjudication of the student.

- The right to a copy of any school student record proposed to be destroyed or deleted. Student records are reviewed every 4 years or upon a student's change in attendance centers, whichever occurs first.
- The right to prohibit the release of directory information concerning the parent's/guardian's child.

Throughout the school year, the District may release directory information regarding students, limited to:

- Name
- Address
- Gender
- Grade level
- Birth date and place
- Parent's/guardian's names and addresses
- Academic awards, degrees, and honors

- Information in relation to school-sponsored activities, organizations, and athletics
- Major field of study
- Period of attendance in school

Any parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student may prohibit the release of any or all of the above information by delivering a written objection to the Building Principal within 30 days of the date of this notice. No directory information will be released within this time period, unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student(s) are specifically informed otherwise.

- The right contained in this statement: No person may condition the granting or withholding of any right, privilege, or benefit or make as a condition of employment, credit, or insurance the securing by any individual of any information from a student's temporary record which such individual may obtain through the exercise of any right secured under State law.
- 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.
- Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

PPRA governs the administration to students of a survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns one or more of the following eight protected areas:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

PPRA also concerns marketing surveys and other areas of student privacy, parental access to information, and the administration of certain physical examination to minors.

For more information on PPRA, please consult: Statute: 20 U.S.C. 1232h. Regulations: 34 CFR Part 98.

The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA and PPRA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
 U.S. Department of Education  
 400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
 Washington, DC 20202-4605

## **Students with Special Needs**

Sterling Public Schools, in cooperation with Bi-County Special Education Cooperative, offers a full range of diagnostic and instructional support services for students with identified special needs. Services are available for handicapping conditions and exceptionalities. Referrals of students for the special education programs and services may be requested by parents and/or school personnel. Parents who want to request an evaluation for special education services should submit a written request to the school principal.

Before a student can receive special education programming and/or services, the following criteria must be met:

The student must be registered at Sterling Public Schools.

The student must have a measurable disability.

A handicapping condition must result from the disability.

The student must have an educational need.

Appropriate procedural safeguards must be followed in order to guarantee the student's civil rights.

These criteria are established through diagnostic testing and evaluation, information provided by school personnel and family, and other sources as requested by the family or school. Eligibility for service is determined and agreed upon at a child's review. Parents, school personnel, Bi-County personnel and others are invited to attend to review the results of the case study evaluation. If eligible for services, an Individual Education Program (IEP) is then developed to address the specific learning needs of the student.

Special Education services are provided in and coordinated with the regular classroom program as much as possible. However, additional resources and/or support are provided as per the best interest of the student's needs. In some instances, placement outside of Sterling Schools is necessary to meet specific student needs. A student who is eligible for special education may be excused from physical education courses in either of the following situations:

1. He or she (a) is in grades 3-12, (b) his or her IEP requires that special education support and services be provided during physical education time, and (c) the parent/guardian agrees or the IEP team makes the determination; or
2. He or she (a) has an IEP, (b) is participating in an adaptive athletic program outside of the school setting, and (c) the parent/guardian documents the student's participation as required by the Superintendent or designee.

A student requiring adapted physical education will receive that service in accordance with the student's Individualized Education Program.

Please address any questions regarding the availability of special education services to your child's teacher or the building principal.

## **Supplies for Students**

Supply lists are available on each school's website or in the school office. Individual teachers may request additional supplies for their classrooms. You will be notified of these additions by a note being sent home with your child. From time to time, your child's classroom supplies may need to be restocked. Students must have gym shoes to participate in physical education classes.

## **Textbooks**

Textbooks are furnished by the school district. A fee for students is charged during registration. Fines are assessed for lost or damaged books. The amount of the fine depends on the replacement cost of the book and the degree of damage caused to the book.

## **Therapy Dogs**

Certified therapy dogs may frequent our schools for various reasons. All therapy dogs visiting our schools will be accompanied by their approved handler and required to prove appropriate certifications, veterinary care, a certificate of veterinary inspection, and proof of rabies vaccination, according to local or state requirements. All therapy dog visits will be approved through the building administrator. Before a therapy dog visits your child's classroom your permission will be requested for your child to interact with the dog. If your child is allergic to dogs, please make sure his or her health file is updated and their teacher is aware.

## **Vandalism**

Any person damaging school property will be assessed the total cost of all replacement or repairs and be subject to disciplinary action.

## **Walking Students**

Student conduct and safety on the way to and from school should be a matter of concern to both parents and staff. The school will cooperate with parents on these matters. Parents should discuss the safest route to school emphasizing the use of sidewalks and not trespassing on private property. Students should cross streets only at the intersection and obey all staff.

## **Withdrawing a Student**

The following procedure must be followed if you are planning to withdraw your child from school:

1. Please notify the office of the date your child will be leaving.

2. Ensure that all books, materials, ipads, and chargers are returned and library fines are paid.
3. When you enroll your child at the new school, you will sign a release of information form. We will then transfer copies of your student's records.



# Sterling Public Schools

*Where kids achieve!*

## Acknowledgement of Receipt of Student Handbook

I acknowledge that I received access to an electronic copy of the 2023-2024 Student Handbook via the school's website, and that I may request a hard copy from the school office. This handbook contains information that will be useful to both parent/guardians and students, including the school's guidelines for student behavior. I agree to review the handbook in detail and to contact the school if I have any questions or need clarification about any of the items contained in this handbook.

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

PRINT complete student's name(s)

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PRINT parent/guardian's full name

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Signature of parent/guardian

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If you are receiving this electronically, please print out the page, sign and return.