



Petersham Center School Parent Handbook

This handbook was created in cooperation with the Administration, Teachers, Staff and School Advisory Council at the Petersham Center School. This handbook, in conjunction with the student handbook, will give families a solid understanding of the practices, procedures and expectations at the Petersham Center School.

PLEASE SIGN THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED AND REVIEWED BOTH THE PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOKS.

PARENTS

(Please sign and return)

I have read and understood the information in the Parent School Handbook. I have reviewed the Student Handbook with my child.

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Child/Children Name

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**PETERSHAM CENTER SCHOOL
MISSION STATEMENT**

The Petersham Center School community is committed to providing a teaching and learning environment in which the educational needs of every individual child are met. We offer a stimulating, positive atmosphere that is responsive to developmental needs and individual learning styles, and challenges each student to develop to his or her fullest potential and to become creative and self-motivated individuals. Our curriculum is designed to enable students to meet specific academic, social and physical goals; as an educational system we accept responsibility for our students meeting those goals.

Petersham Center School welcomes families and the community as participants in the educational experience, and we seek to give students skills to participate as valued members of their families, and social and educational communities. At Center School the physical, social and mental integrity of each child is respected and we affirm the importance of differences as well as similarities amongst individuals. We encourage the ideals of cooperation, caring and respect in school, at home and in the community. We strive to provide students with an educational experience that will equip them to become confident and capable learners throughout their lives and to

become productive citizens in a democratic society.

In order to accomplish this mission we will:

- Provide students with a curriculum that introduces them to basic skills and knowledge that will enable them to achieve.
- Provide students with challenges and opportunities to expand their knowledge, interests and cultural awareness.
- Guarantee a curriculum that provides for individual differences and allows achievement for all while encouraging respect for individual differences.
- Provide students with experiences and opportunities to foster responsible decision making, and problem solving.
- Provide students with the history, values, and ideals upon which our nation was founded and the importance of being a productive member of society.
- Assist students in developing a positive self-image and in becoming self-disciplined.
- Assist students to develop an appreciation for using leisure time productively for physical, intellectual, creative and social activities.
- Encourage students to develop a desire for life-long learning.
- Provide students with experiences that encourage them to love enjoy and respect their natural environment.
- Provide students with experiences to prepare them for the transition from the Petersham Center School to Middle/High school.
- Guarantee a school administration, faculty and support staff that will uphold the philosophy and objectives of the Center School.

District Philosophy Statement

Petersham School District is committed to providing a secure and stimulating environment in which to work and learn. We provide a climate that promotes healthy, human relationships and enhance the quality of life for children as well as adults. We believe that:

1. Everyone has the right to be physically safe.
2. Everyone has the right to be treated with courtesy and respect.
3. Everyone has the right to a clean, positive and safe learning environment.

These rights go hand-in-hand with the responsibility to contribute positively to the school environment and to strive for excellence at all times.

Petersham Center School students are expected to observe the following code of conduct throughout the school day, including lunchroom and playground activities.

Code of Conduct

- **Everyone has the right to be safe, physical threats and injuries are unacceptable.**
- **Weapons (real or toy), illegal drugs and other unsafe items(matches, firecrackers, snappers, etc.) are not permitted on**

school property

- **Everyone has the right to feel respected and free of fear, disrespectful or threatening behavior will not be tolerated.**
- **Respect and care of our environment, our property and the property of others is expected, destructive behavior will not be tolerated.**

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED FOR VIOLATIONS OF CENTER SCHOOL RULES:

The goals of these consequences are to help children:

1. Identify the behavior and discuss why it is inappropriate.
2. Take responsibility for the behavior.
3. "Give back" to the community the calm and peace that has been disrupted, by making amends and repairs.
4. Discuss alternatives to inappropriate behavior.

Minor Offenses

Each will be dealt with according to the seriousness of the offense, the age of the student, and whether or not the behavior is a one-time or repeated event. Specific consequences are at the discretion of the supervisory adult. Whenever possible, consequences will include a community service/repair component.

Major Offenses

These would include, but not limited to, physical aggression (actual or attempted), threat of physical harm, verbal assaults, and gross destruction of property/equipment. These offenses require an automatic Discipline Report. Repeated rude or defiant behavior, repeated use of vulgar language and repeated disruptions of class, which continue after a specific warning from the supervisory adult, would also result in a Discipline Report.

For each offense, a supervisory adult will complete a Discipline Report. The report will be sent to the Principal and remain on file in the office. The Principal will contact the supervisory adult (and the classroom teacher, if not the same person) and counselor to discuss the reported offense. The Principal will speak to the child involved as soon as possible.

Consequences for Major Offenses are:

First Report

1. Loss of 2 days recess, with time spent on community service/repair.
2. Student completes a Behavior Report describing his/her behavior and reasons why it is unacceptable.
3. Parent/Guardian is contacted and report is carried home by the student for parent to read, sign and return to school. If necessary, classroom teacher will follow-up.

Second Report

1. Repeat all consequences for first referral, with 3 days of community service/repair.
2. Principal will make personal contact with the parent/guardian. Classroom teacher and supervisory adult will be notified of this contact.
3. Student and parent/guardian will be reminded of consequences if a third Report is necessary.

Third Report

1. Repeat all consequences for first referral, with 5 days of community service/repair.
2. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be called to meet with the Principal, classroom teacher and supervisory adult and the student to discuss the discipline issue.
3. In-school suspension (all assignments completed in supervised space other than regular classroom) may be administered at the discretion of the Principal.

Additional Reports

In-school or out-of-school suspension may be administered at the discretion of the Principal.

Note:

Some offenses are of such a serious nature that it becomes necessary to circumvent the stated procedures. Possession or distribution of tobacco, drugs, alcohol and dangerous weapons, as well as major

physical aggression is examples of such offenses. Consequences for these and similar offenses will result in the Principal taking immediate action which may include suspending the student and/or notifying the police.

Suspension Policy

Serious breaches of standards of behavior may result in suspensions from school. Generally, a suspension may be imposed when a student's behavior creates a threat to his own or other's safety such as fighting, committing an assault on another, stealing, vandalism, possessing weapons, explosives or other prohibited materials (tobacco, drugs and alcohol), making false alarms or bomb threats, or lewd or threatening behavior or language. In cases of repeated violations of other disciplinary rules, suspension may be imposed as a last resort after other attempts have been made to resolve the problem. In no case may suspension be for more than 10 days duration, unless an emergency situation is determined by the Superintendent.

When a student is suspended, the student will be provided due process which includes a notice and explanation of the suspension, an opportunity to present his/her own views of the situation prior to the suspension unless continued presence of the student threatens disruption of the school or endangers persons or property. (Parents or guardians will be notified by telephone prior to the suspension. Before being readmitted after a suspension, the student must report to the designated school official with a parent or guardian for a conference.) Suspended students will not be in school or on the school grounds without permission from the principal.

The Principal will implement specific procedures for imposing suspension, conferring with parents and readmitting and counseling suspended students.

Discipline of Special Education Students

Protection of the IDEA regulations applies to students who have been found eligible for special education and to students for whom the school has knowledge that a child may have a disability.

Generally, students with special needs are expected to adhere to the same discipline regulations as non-special needs students. At the same time, legislation has been enacted to provide procedural safeguards to students with disabilities.

School personnel can remove (suspend) a child with a disability for short periods of time as long as the removal does not constitute a change in placement. A change of placement occurs if the removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days or the child is subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because they cumulate to more than 10 school days in a school year, and because such factors such as length of each removal, the total amount of time the child is removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another.

School personnel may order, to the extent removal would be applied to children without disabilities, the removal of a child with a disability from the child's current placement for not more than 10 consecutive school days for any violation of school rules, and any additional removals of not more than 10 consecutive school days in that same school year for separate incidents of misconduct (as long as those removals do not constitute a change of placement).

The public agency (school) must provide services after a child with a disability has been removed for more than 10 school days in the same school year. However, it is the intention of the Petersham Center School to provide services as soon as feasibly possible when a student is suspended for multiple days. In addition, the LEA must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the child. If the child already has a behavioral intervention plan, the IEP team shall meet to review the plan and its implementation and modify as necessary.

School personnel may order a change of a placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 days if the child carries a weapon to school or a school function or possesses or uses illegal drugs or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function. A hearing officer may order a change to an interim setting for not more than 45 days if the LEA demonstrates that maintaining the current placement is likely to result in injury to the child or others. If an action is contemplated regarding a 45 day removal or other action that constitutes a change of placement the parents must be notified and provided procedural safeguards notice not later than the date on which the decision to take action is made. Immediately, if possible, but in no case later than 10 school days after the date on which the decision to take that action is made, a review must be conducted of the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action (manifestation determination).

If the child's parent disagrees with the manifestation determination, the parent may request a hearing to appeal. The State or local educational agency shall arrange for an expedited hearing before a hearing officer. If a parent requests a hearing or an appeal to challenge an interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination, the child must remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until the expiration of the time period provided (45 days), whichever occurs first unless the parent and local educational agency agree otherwise.

See Appendix: B

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Petersham School Committee consists of three members. They are responsible for setting overall policies and establishing programs and procedures which will best allow the individual educational achievement of each student. The Committee also proposes a budget and

oversees the spending of money allocated to the school.

The Petersham School Committee meets once a month. Meeting times and dates are posted prior to each meeting at the school, and at the Town Office. Meetings are open to the public.

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM

Regular attendance is essential to a student's success in school. Most subjects are taught in sequence, requiring the understanding of each concept in order of its presentation. Persistent absenteeism creates a genuine hardship for a child and is regarded as a very serious problem.

The School Committee does recognize, however, that in accordance to state law parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: 1. Illness or quarantine, 2. Bereavement or serious illness in family, 3. Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child and 4. For observance of major religious holidays.

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the school administrator.

A student's understanding of the importance of day to day school work is a critical factor in the shaping of character. Parents can help their children by refusing to allow them to miss school needlessly.

Accordingly, parents will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. If we have not been informed of a student's absence by 9:00 a.m. on the day the student is out, the school will make every reasonable attempt to contact the parent or guardian to confirm that the child had not arrived at the school.

Parents who wish to pick up an absent child's school work or homework may request it on the *second* consecutive day the child is absent. Parents should call in the morning so the work will be ready for the end of the school day. In addition, if you choose to pull your child from school for a vacation, the teacher will put together the work that has been done during the child's absence and give it to them when they return. Reasonable time for completion of missed work will be given.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.

Repeated absence may result in retention of student in current grade placement.

TARDINESS/ EARLY Dismissal

Prompt arrival at school is expected of all students. Late arrival disrupts class, causes loss of instruction time and is often uncomfortable for the tardy student. Any student who arrives at school after 8:25 a.m. is considered tardy and must receive a late pass from the office prior to entering the classroom. In addition, students who arrived to school prior to 8:25 a.m. may be considered tardy if they are not in their seats ready to learn at 8:25 a.m. In

order to ensure that your child has ample time to complete their morning routine and be ready to learn on time, please try to drop them off at 8:15 a.m. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is exhibiting a pattern of tardiness.

At times students may need to be picked up from school prior to dismissal time. Parents should send in a note with their child or call the school first thing in the morning. A message can be left on the machine.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Students should arrive between 8:15 A.M. and 8:20 A.M. Students arriving after 8:25 A.M. will be considered tardy. Walkers or students receiving rides to school should not arrive prior to 8:15 A.M. unless special arrangements are made with the office.

Walkers and riders are dismissed through the front doors of the school. Parents are asked to wait outside the double doors for their children. Riders will be dismissed directly to whoever is picking them up and will not be sent out to the cars. Parents who are picking up their children from school should be at the school for the 2:45 p.m. dismissal time. Once the teacher on duty has left with the walkers, remaining children will wait in the office to be picked up.

School staff supervise the playground during the lunch recess. The playground is not supervised before and after school and students are expected to leave for home immediately following dismissal.

Bus students are dismissed through the community entrance near the gymnasium. No cars are allowed in the bus area during dismissal.

School is dismissed at 2:45 P.M. for grades K-6.

WALKERS

Students who walk to school should come straight to school. They should remain on the side of the road at all times and use caution when crossing a street. The cross-walks by the school should be used.

Walkers should not arrive before 8:15 A.M. There is no supervision before that time.

When walkers are dismissed, a teacher is on duty to cross Spring Street and Hardwick Road with the students. Students who are walkers must cross with the teacher at dismissal time.

BICYCLES

Students in grades 2-6 are permitted to ride bicycles to and from school. Bicycles are to be left in the bike rack and may not be ridden during recess periods. The children should observe all bike safety rules when riding their bikes.

The parent or guardian of a student who normally rides the bus must inform the school if his/her child plans to ride a bike.

Bike riders should not arrive before 8:15 A.M. There is no supervision before that time.

CHANGES IN GOING HOME ROUTINE

On any day that your child does not follow her or his usual routine for going home, please send a written note to the teacher with complete instruction. Without written instructions we will help the child follow the regular plan. Please be careful about this; each year we have a good deal of anxiety, confusion and lost time because children are not sure whether or not they are to be picked up, go home on the bus, or await some other special arrangement. If you must call the school to change your child's dismissal routine, please do so prior to 2:15 p.m. to help avoid any last minute confusion.

BUS RULES

The Petersham Center School currently uses Kuzmeskus Bus company for transportation. They can be reached at 413-863-2595.

Approximate pick up times are provided in the Athol Daily News Back to School Edition. Bus routes change from year to year depending on the number of students and the area where students live.

All students are expected to remain in their seats and keep conversations at a reasonable volume. Students are expected to follow bus rules to ensure everyone's safety.

Students engaging in inappropriate and/or unsafe behaviors may be suspended from riding the school bus for a specific period of time. Any such suspensions will be initiated by the school principal. Suspension of riding privileges for a specific period of time is automatic with a third bus misconduct notice, but suspension for serious infractions may occur after any one infraction.

CANCELLATION AND DISMISSAL OF SCHOOL

Cancellation or dismissal of school takes place only during circumstances such as extreme weather, equipment failure, or public crisis. We are aware of the hardship which can be caused by an abrupt cancellation. Therefore, school will not be cancelled unless a significant safety risk has been created by unusual circumstances.

Delayed openings and cancellations are posted on the following television stations: Channel 5, Fox 25 and WB 56. You can also hear this information on WSR96.1. In addition, school status is posted on the Petersham Center School's website (www.petershamcenterschool.org)

The Petersham Center School's voice mail system is also activated once a decision is made to cancel or delay school. When calling, you will first be welcomed to the Center School's automated system and then be informed if there is a change in the school's operating status. The Petersham Center School's phone number is (978) 724-3363 or 724-3518.

The PTG also sponsors a parent snow chain. In the event of a cancellation or delay the snow chain is activated and parents are called and notified of any changes. Forms for the snow chain are sent home early in the school year. We strongly encourage you to sign up for this program.

On rare occasions it is necessary to close school early due to rapidly worsening weather conditions or other emergencies.

If school must be dismissed early because of hazardous weather or other emergencies, the office will make every attempt to contact you at the number listed on your child's emergency form. If we are unable to contact you, we will call the emergency contact people listed on

your child's form.

Lastly, if school is not closed and you feel road conditions are not adequate for safe bus transportation, it is reasonable that as a parent you may decide not to allow your children to attend school that day.

PARENT-TEACHER GROUP

The P.T.G. is a very active organization in our school. The purpose of the P.T.G. is to plan programs which are informational and beneficial to parents and teachers and which are under the guidance of the principal. The most important function of the P.T.G. is to foster the interaction of parents, teachers and principals who work together for the success and benefit of the children and of the school. All parents are welcome to attend and participate in P.T.G. activities. Meetings are posted on the monthly calendar and also in the weekly newsletters.

VOLUNTEERS

Residents of Petersham are encouraged to volunteer their time in various areas including but not limited to, library, individual classroom aides, readers or homework helpers. All adults who volunteer at the school are required to complete a CORI (criminal offense record investigation) as well as other forms; these forms can be obtained at the school office. If you are interested in doing volunteer help, please contact any teacher or call the school. Your help will be warmly accepted and we guarantee your efforts will be most rewarding.

SCHOOL COUNCIL

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has enacted legislation which calls for the establishment of a school council for each elementary, secondary and independent vocational school in the Commonwealth. Each council is to have the following categories of membership: principal, teachers, parents of students attending the school, and community representatives who are not parents, teachers, or students at the school.

Councils are to assist principals in adopting educational goals for each school, identifying the educational needs of the students attending the schools, and formulating a school improvement plan.

Parent representatives on this council must be elected by the Parent-Teacher organization. Elections will be conducted by the Parent-Teacher organization at a meeting in January.

REPORT CARDS/CONFERENCES

In September there will be an evening Open House to share information about the general nature of your child's classroom and to answer questions you may have about the school program.

Parent-Teacher conferences will be held in October. At this meeting your child's progress is reviewed, questions and concerns shared, and goals established for the school year.

Report cards are issued three times a year for students in grades 1-6, and two times a year for students in Kindergarten. Progress reports are sent home mid-marking period for students in the 5th and 6th grades.

Please carefully review your child's progress and contact the school if you have questions regarding grades. Report cards should be returned within one week of receiving them. They may be kept upon completion of the grade level

ADMISSION

All children who reach the age of five years on or before September 1st of the current school year are eligible for kindergarten in September. Children are registered for Kindergarten in the school office. Proof of birth date (birth certificate, passport) is required, and Massachusetts law requires proof that each child has been immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, polio, Hepatitis B, and Chicken Pox. Effective March 1, 1990, kindergarten children must have had a screening for lead poisoning.

KINDERGARTEN SCREENING

Each child who enters Kindergarten will be given a "screening" in fulfillment of the requirements of Massachusetts regulations and to help us know the child and plan appropriately for his or her needs.

The screening gives us information about a child's strengths and needs. For example, the gross motor items on the screening help us identify children who will profit by activities designed to develop their coordination in tasks using large muscles (such as running, throwing a ball, etc.). This screening occurs in late spring. Parents are notified if there are any concerns regarding their child's development.

HOMEWORK

Homework is important. It is an extension of the learning that takes place in school. In an effort to increase students' study skills the school has the following homework policy. The average times of the homework assignments are as follows:

Grade 1 -- 15 minutes
Grade 2 -- 15-20 minutes
Grade 3 -- 20-30 minutes
Grade 4 -- 45 minutes
Grade 5 -- 45 minutes
Grade 6 -- 45 minutes - 1 hour

In order to help your child develop and increase his/her study skills, the following suggestions are provided.

1. Establish a homework time and area in your household. Choose a time and place each day that will minimize interruptions and that will be the best for your family.
2. Eliminate distractions. Research suggests that children can concentrate more easily when the television, radio and stereo are not in use. If you have more than one child, establish a quiet time for

all. Younger children could look at a picture book or perhaps play a quiet game. Children in lower grades could read, write a letter to a grandparent, draw, etc.

3. Be available. Don't expect your child to go to his/her room and return later with everything completed. Encouragement, praise and occasional help let your child know that the work he/she is doing is important and that you care.

4. Time. If your child completes the assignment quickly there is probably a long term assignment such as a book report or report that could use attention or he/she could review for a test. Encourage your child to go beyond the assigned work and use the extra time for pleasure reading and for letter and creative writing. This helps develop study skills and a life long enjoyment for learning.

5. Ask. If you have a question, please call your child's teacher at school. Let the teacher know if the assignments are taking considerably longer than expected or if your child fails to bring home an assignment.

Homework provides practice and drill that reinforces classroom learning and provides opportunities for independent study, research, and creative thinking. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that all materials needed to complete assignments are brought home at the end of the school day. Students will not be allowed to return to the school to pick up missing materials after they have been dismissed at 2:45. Let's work together to help your child develop good study habits and a positive attitude for learning.

INSURANCE

School insurance will be offered at the beginning of each school year. Information and envelopes for school insurance will be issued to each child. If you wish school insurance, please place the exact amount in the envelope and return it according to the directions given. Checks should be made out to the insurance company.

LUNCH, BREAKFAST, SNACK AND MILK

- Lunch/Milk: Children may purchase hot lunch which includes milk or purchase milk separately. Children can choose either the hot lunch option or the alternate. The price for hot lunch, which includes milk is \$2.00 and milk only is 40¢. Reduced lunch is 40¢.
- Breakfast: Children may purchase breakfast, which includes Cereal, Juice, Toast or Muffin and Milk, prior to the start of school each day. Breakfast costs \$1.00, reduced breakfast is 40¢. Students who are eligible for reduced or free lunch are also eligible for reduced or free breakfast.
- Snack: Students can either bring their own snack from home or purchase a snack from the school. We offer students a wide range of healthy snack food for 50¢. Snack money is collected at the time of purchase and should not be sent into the office.
- Menus/payment: Weekly/monthly menus are published each Friday for the coming week/month. Lunch may be purchased by the week or

month. Please indicate the student's name and the day or days that hot lunch will be purchased on their ticket. The dollar amount should be included on the outside of the payment envelope. The payment envelope should contain the lunch ticket and money/check for lunch that week or month. If you plan to pay for lunch by check, please make it payable to "PETERSHAM CENTER SCHOOL".

RECESS

Your child will have outdoor recess every day unless there is rain, heavy snow, extreme cold or wind chill causing extreme cold. All children who are able to attend school are to participate in outside recess whenever it is offered, except in extraordinary circumstances. If children are not able to go outside for twenty minutes, it seems wiser that they not be in school. If there is a severe condition, we shall be glad to make necessary exceptions. Such requests must be cleared through the principal's office.

Please remind your child to dress warmly during the winter months. Boots, mittens, a hat, a jacket and snow pants are essential. Children who are not dressed appropriately for the weather will not be able to participate in outdoor recess. Students should not wear their boots during the school day; they should have other footwear for the classroom. It is helpful for both student and teacher if all outer clothing worn to school is marked with your child's name, especially in the primary grades.

RECORDS

Records are kept on each student by the administration and classroom teacher. Parents may make an appointment to review the records or test scores by calling the office. Student records are released to a new school when the school receives a signed transfer form or when the parent completes a transfer form at the Center School.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION FORM

Each September you will complete an emergency information form which will include important information the school will need if an emergency arises. If there are any changes in information contained on the form during the school year, please contact the office or your child's teacher.

Special Education

State and Federal law which guarantees a free and appropriate public education for children who have been identified as having a significant handicap that prevents optimum learning or functioning for them within the regular education program. A team of parents, teachers, administrators and specialists joins together to discuss the child's educational needs and create an I.E.P. (Individualized Educational Plan) for the child. The specialists in this department include a full-time teacher and the services of a Special Needs Administrator, Speech Pathologist, School Adjustment Counselor, Nurse, O.T. and P.T.

