

Westchester Elementary School (WES) Handbook



Westchester . . . School of the Stars!

School Year: 2015-2016

Welcome to the Wonderful Community of
Westchester Elementary School (WES)!

Dear Westchester Elementary School Families:

Elementary school is our children's introduction to the world outside their homes and parent involvement is a cornerstone of our children's success. Students, staff, parents, and community members are active in making WES a great place to learn and teach. Please consider joining us as a volunteer. Information regarding how you can help our students will be coming home soon! This handbook provides useful information about many activities at the school. This handbook will help you take advantage of all opportunities WES provides while making an easy transition into our wonderful school. Information provided in this handbook will also help ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff. Parents are asked to read this handbook and keep it in an easily accessible place for reference.

Westchester encourages all parents to be involved in their child's education. To get involved, go to <http://westchesteres.bcps.org/> and click on *Volunteer Opportunities*. Please contact us with questions, suggestions, and corrections.

Have a wonderful year!

Mr. Phil Byers
Principal
Westchester Elementary School

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Administration

Position	Name	E-mail Address
Principal	<u>Phil Byers</u>	pbyers@bcps.org
Assistant Principal	Kirsten Merashoff	kmerashoff@bcps.org
Administrative Secretary	LaTasha Foster	lfoster3@bcps.org
Clerical Secretary	Jeri Baldwin	jbaldwin3@bcps.org
Cafeteria Manager	Lisa Costa	lcosta@bcps.org
Custodial Manager	Jeannette Perry	jperry@bcps.org
Nurse	Heather Denhard	hdenhard@bcps.org
Counselor	Stephanie Walsh	swalsh2@bcps.org

School Phone Number: 410-887-1088

Fax# 410-887-1092

School Hours:

Arrival	9:00 a.m.
Instructional Day Begins	9:15 a.m.
Dismissal	3:45 p.m.

Supervision for students begins at 9:00 a.m. **Please do not drop your children off at school before this time** unless they are scheduled for a school supervised activity. There is no staff available to supervise students prior to 9:00 a.m. Students are expected to arrive at school on time. Students who are late to school (at or after 9:15 a.m.) are to report to the office accompanied by an adult for a late pass before going to class. We require parents/guardians to provide a written note for any/all late arrivals and to sign the child in at the office.

Attendance

Official Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Attendance Rules

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance four hours or more of the school day. A student is counted present for ½ day if in attendance for at least 2 hours of the school day, but less than four hours. If a student is present less than 2 hours they will be recorded absent.

WES Attendance Policy

Westchester Elementary School (WES) opens the doors at 9:00 a.m. Morning announcements will begin at 9:15 a.m. Students will be considered late at or after 9:15 a.m. Buses will begin unloading students at 9:00 a.m. and students will proceed into the main front doors of WES to their homeroom classes. Walkers will also enter through the main front door of the school and car riders will enter in the side door by the gym. Parents, please arrange your schedule to have your child arrive on time in order for them to take full advantage of his/her learning experience.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, it is not necessary to call the school, however, an automated call will go out to the parents to confirm the absence. Immediately upon your child's return to school please provide a written note with the following information:

- The date note is written
- The date(s) of the absence(s)
- The reason for the absence(s)
- Name of the child

Students with a fever should not be sent to school until they have been fever free for 24-hours. Students who develop a fever during the school day will be sent home.

Baltimore County Public Schools Homework Guidelines

Grades 1-3 An average of 30 minutes per day for all subjects combined 3-4 times per week. No weekends or holidays.

Grades 4-5 An average of 60 minutes per day for all subjects combined 4-5 times per week. No homework assigned over holidays. Possible long-term assignments.

Absence Homework Policy

During the course of every year we have families who take vacations when school is in session. Frequently parents ask teachers to gather all the work students will miss during their absence so they can complete it while on vacation. County policy considers absences due to vacations as "unlawful" absences, and students are not to receive credit for work missed. Therefore, teachers are not to provide work for students absent due to vacation that can count toward a student's grade. Teachers can provide non-graded general work packets for student practice upon request.

Make-up Work for Prolonged Excused Absences

In the case of prolonged absence such as for illness, it is recommended make-up assignments be requested by the parent. Arrangements can be made by emailing the student's teacher(s). Teachers will need adequate time to gather materials and information for these assignments. Assignments will be available for pick up in the office at the end of a school day. Please contact the school prior to picking up work to be sure the office has something from the teacher. Students will have the same number of days they were absent to make up the work (e.g. 5 days absent, 5 days). If make-up work is not completed in the time given, the student can not receive credit for the work.

Behavior Handbook

All students will receive a copy of the Student Behavior Handbook during the first weeks of school or at the time they are enrolled, if enrolling after the start of the school year. A classroom teacher will show their class the BCPS Office of Student Support Services Student Handbook presentation, which discusses the content of the handbook. The handbook is then to be taken home by the child and shared with a parent/guardian. Once you have reviewed this manual from your child, it is required that you and your child sign and date the last page of the handbook and return it to his/her teacher. These will then be collected and kept on file throughout the year.

Parents enrolling their child(ren) after the school year has started are to review this handbook with their child(ren), sign, and return it to their homeroom teacher(s) the first day they begin at WES.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

1. Instructions shall be requested at the time the student registers/enrolls for the school year and shall include:
 - a. Students' regular mode of transportation at the end of the day.
 - b. A list of persons, in addition to the custodial parent/guardian, who are authorized to pick up the child.
2. Students shall be released according to the written instructions provided by the custodial parent/guardian.
3. Any deviation from the authorized release process must be approved by the principal/designee prior to the student departing school in another manner.
4. It shall be the responsibility of the custodial parent/guardian to notify the school in writing if release instructions are to be revised. If written instructions are not provided to the school the student shall only be released to ride home on the assigned bus or with the custodial parent/guardian.
5. If the student is to be picked up early, the parent/guardian or designee shall report to the front office and sign for the students' release.
6. Each school is required to maintain a daily entry/exit log of students signing in late or signing out early. An adult is **REQUIRED** to sign a child arriving late (on or after 9:15 AM) into school. Also, the school shall require proof of identification from an adult (visual id by an employer, driver's license, picture id, etc.) to assure that they are authorized to pick up the student.
7. Additionally, students cannot ride a bus other than their assigned bus without 48 hours written approval by an administrator. Each bus has a maximum capacity and additional students cannot be transported if a bus is at capacity. Please do not make plans for your child to go to a friend's house, if it requires them to be transported by a bus they typically do not ride. Students without 48 hours prior school administrative approval to ride a bus they do not typically ride will be sent home following their normal routine.

Exceptions: A student may be released to a person with lawful authority to take custody of the student, e.g., a police officer with a warrant. In such cases, the student's parent/guardian shall be notified at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the Board authorizes emergency release of students for illness or other bona fide reasons, as determined by the Principal.

Dismissal is a busy time at Westchester as close to 600 students are being dismissed. **We encourage parents to use the parent car loop and not pick up students in the lobby.** If students must be met in the lobby, please keep the center of the lobby clear, so that students may move through this area.

Drop –Off and Pick- Up Procedures

Morning Drop-Off Procedures – Car Riders

Pull into the parking lot and circle around to the right to the drop-off point, which is next to the front school trailers. Please follow the one way arrows on the parking lot at all times. Do not drive to the front of the school building, as this area is closed to any and all car traffic to allow the buses to drop-off students. **Please drive slowly and proceed with caution, as this is a very busy time. Please do not allow your children to get out of your car prior to your car reaching the front of the line, as this poses a danger to your child.** All students enter the building through the main front entrance. If you have business inside the school, please park in a designated spot in the parking lot or along Old Frederick Road (please obey parking signs). All visitors must enter the school through the front entrance and stop in the office to sign in as a visitor or volunteer.

Morning Drop-Off Procedures – Walkers

If you are parking on Old Frederick Road, please use the sidewalks and crosswalks when walking your child to the school building rather than coming across the path and over the hill. Using the route over the hill in the front of the building causes a dangerous situation as you are then walking behind the buses and down, at times, a slippery slope. The staff supervising the lot cannot see around the buses to know someone is there as they give buses the OK to exit and people have slipped and fallen down the slope. There have also been some difficulties with traffic at dismissal. We ask that you please follow the traffic pattern and park only where designated. Please also be courteous to our neighbors and avoid blocking their driveways. The police monitor and will ticket. We thank you for putting safety first!

Afternoon Pick-Up Procedures

Notes from home are required for all departures from the normal routine (i.e. early pick-ups, permission to be picked-up by others, etc.). For normal 3:45 p.m. pick-up, please follow the same guidelines for the morning drop-off procedures for car riders and walkers.

Please do not ask either teachers or the front office to accommodate a change in routine in order to accommodate a play date. Please **DO NOT** call the school or send in a request for your child to ride a different bus to accommodate play dates/childcare. Request for your child to ride a different bus **MUST** be received **48 hours** ahead of time. Several buses are at capacity and cannot accommodate additional students not scheduled to ride the bus. Please be prepared with alternate plans, if the bus you are requesting your child ride is at capacity and unable to accommodate your request. A response to your request will be provided, if you have not received a response please contact the front office to check the status of your request.

If there is a change in departure from the normal routine (i.e. not riding the bus, will be a car rider), please email

Jeri Baldwin at jbaldwin3@bcps.org and

LaTasha Foster at lfoster3@bcps.org.

Teachers often don't see their emails until the school day is over. Please always contact the front office.

Afternoon Pick- Up Procedures – Car Riders

Please follow the same procedures as morning pick-up. Students are asked to remain in the school gymnasium until the teacher on duty calls them out for their ride. Parents should remain in their car and wait patiently for their student to be called.

Afternoon Pick- Up Procedures – Walkers

If your child is an afternoon walker, an adult is required to meet them at the walker door. This is the door to the west of the main front entrance nearest the kindergarten playground.

Inclement Weather Procedures

During inclement weather when Baltimore County schools are delayed by 1 or 2 hours, there is no childcare (Open Door) or supervision available for students at school. Children should not be dropped off at school prior to 9:55 AM when delayed by 1 hour or 10:55 AM when delayed by 2 hours. On these days, the school cannot open the doors for the students until 10 AM on 1 hour delays and 11 AM on 2 hour delays. Please make appropriate arrangements for your children on these days. In circumstances where children are dropped off prior to these times, it places the school in the unfortunate position of having to contact the proper authorities.

Parking in the Bus Boarding Area/Front of School

There is no parking allowed in the front area of the school, when the barricades are in place. The front parking lot is used for busses to drop off and pick up students. . If you have business or are volunteering at school between the hours 9:30 – 2:30 the parking lot will be available for you to use. If the space is blocked off for any school activities you will still be able to park in the side lot or on Old Frederick Road.

Requests to Leave School Early/Change of Dismissal Plans

A written request to have a student excused from class early or any changes in dismissal should be sent with your child to school. The time and reason for leaving must be included. In an emergency, we will accept a fax or e-mail as your request. The school will reasonably accommodate necessary changes due to family emergency or medical appointments. A student will be released only to the parent or legal guardian unless the school has been notified in writing that permission is granted for someone else to pick-up their child. The parent, guardian, or authorized person must come to the office and present photo identification when signing out a student.

Emergency Early Dismissal, School Closings, and Delays

Emergency Early Dismissal Plan

At the beginning of the school year parents will be asked to complete an Emergency Early Dismissal Plan Form. This form provides the school with specific instructions about where a child is to go in the event of an emergency early school dismissal. Please note: If parents choose to have their child follow normal dismissal procedures, children may not ride a bus other than their own. Some parents indicate that their child is to ride the bus home and report to a particular neighbor's house. Other parents make arrangements with Play Centers for childcare. From time to time there are emergency events, such as a broken water main, when

Westchester is the only school to close. In such an event, Westchester Elementary is required by BCPS policy to have direct contact with each parent before children can be released from school. We will attempt to make this contact by phone and also by email. In order for a child to be sent home on the bus, we must have verbal or email confirmation from his/her parent. Otherwise children will remain at school until parents can pick them up.

Holidays

For a complete listing of the school year holiday closings, as well as planned early dismissals, visit the BCPS website: www.bcps.org. If you do not have internet access please ask your child's teacher to print this for you. The current and next school years' calendars are available.

Inclement Weather

At the start of the school year you will receive an Inclement Weather Emergency Form to complete for the school year. In the event of inclement weather:

- Please **DO NOT** call the school! When our phone lines are jammed with incoming calls we are unable to make necessary outgoing calls.
- Listen to the radio for late openings, early dismissals or school closings. Changes and updates can occur rapidly. When you hear one change please continue to listen to the radio for updated information.
- The BCPS website also posts notification when schools are closed due to inclement weather. Go to www.bcps.org and look at the top of the page.
- Please remember that Open Door is not available when school is closed.
- Please plan ahead and make your arrangements now.

Also remember the following important details:

- Students can not ride a bus they do not normally ride. Please do not ask that your child ride a bus other than his/her own. Find a friend or neighbor who lives in your same neighborhood, so that your child can ride his/her regularly scheduled bus.
- Discuss with your child where he/she is to go if school closes early.

School Closings and Delays

For school closings or delay do one of the following:

Contact the District website: <http://www.bcps.org>

Radio: Listen to WBAL 1090 AM

Sign-up for school closing alerts: <http://www.schoolsout.com/view/school/41>

School Records

At the beginning of the school year parents will fill out a Student Emergency Information Sheet. This information will be used to update your child(ren)s data in the school's electronic enrollment program. It is extremely important that the office be informed when/if any of this information changes throughout the school year.

The information on this sheet is used to contact parents, for example when a child becomes ill or is injured; therefore the importance of up-to-date information is imperative.

If you have legal custody of your child, please make sure you have provided the school with copies of all appropriate documents. You can also schedule an appointment early in the year to see the administration or guidance counselor to discuss this matter. Custody papers and other related legal documents are required to be on file at school. It is suggested that you make a note regarding your custody status on your child's emergency sheet.

Please be aware that noncustodial parents have legal rights that the school must follow.

BCPS One Card

In 2014, BCPS started a new program called BCPS One Card. Each student receives a photo identification card that must be worn at all times when in the building. This ID card is used for the library and in the future will be used for attendance and transportation. Student's leave their BCPS One Card at school. If a student loses their card, a replacement card will be issued for the cost of \$5.00. All students MUST have this ID card.

Reporting Student Progress

Good communication between parents/guardians and teachers is very important to the educational process. There are four reporting periods during the school year. Additionally, interim reports are sent out the middle of each quarter if needed.

First graders will only receive report cards during the second, third, and fourth reporting periods. Conferences will be held with the first grade parents during the first reporting period. Kindergarten parents may review the Kindergarten Section for information regarding Kindergarten Progress Reports and Conferences. Please see the [Conferences Section](#) for more information regarding Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Dress Code

Please make sure your child wears shoes that are secure on their feet. While flip-flops are fashionable, they are not safe for children who are using playground equipment, running through the grass, or in physical education (PE) class. Some flip-flops and sandals that have higher heels are also not safe for children at school. Please help us avoid accidents by ensuring your child wears safe, appropriate footwear.

Note: Our school tends to be very warmly heated in the winter months and quite chilly in the months when the air conditioning is on. The rooms on the second floor feel the temperature extremes the most. Dressing your child in layers will ensure their comfort throughout the day.

Food and Cafeteria

All students have the option of buying breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria. Breakfast is served at 9:00 a.m. every day except for half days and two-hour delays. Lunch includes entrée, vegetable, fruit, bread, milk, or juice. You will receive a calendar with the daily menus at the beginning of each month via backpack mail and they are also available on the BCPS web-site.

You may send in peanut items or items with peanut tracings for lunch as there is a peanut-free tables in the cafeteria. If your child will be buying lunch or receiving a free or reduced price lunch, he/she will have an account with the cafeteria (see See MyLunchMoney®). If you put money into this account on a monthly basis it will be very helpful to you and your child. You will be notified when funds are running low, and it saves your child from having to worry about carrying money to school each day. Your child can buy additional items or a drink, even if bringing a lunch from home. He/she can buy lunch one day or many days each week. A menu will be sent home at the beginning of each month, in the Mailbox folder, to help you with this decision.

MyLunchMoney®

The cafeterias in the BCPS system operate via a Point-of-Sale system. Each student will be assigned a Personal Identification Number (PIN). These numbers will be sent home on the first day of school. Please ensure your child knows his/her PIN and remind your child to **NOT** share their number with anyone. Your child's PIN will remain the same each year. Your child will enter this PIN into the keypad in the cafeteria line when he/she purchases beverages, snacks, or meals. If your child will be a regular or occasional meal/snack buyer, please make sure your child always has money in their account, this can be done online or checks can be made payable to the *Westchester Café*.

Forgotten or Lost Lunch

If your child has forgotten his/her lunch or has lost his/her lunch money, the school will provide them a lunch only – no snacks. **Please note:** If a child must “borrow” a lunch from the café it must be paid back the next day. If your child's account is not in good standing we will offer them an alternate meal. Please do not wait for a letter or a call. At the end of the year any remaining credit on your child's account will be held in the account for the next school year. If you have questions, please contact the Cafeteria Manager by calling the school at 410-887-1088.

Meal Assistance

Applications for free and reduced lunches are available. Anyone can apply and applications are accepted all year. If your child was already approved for free or reduced meals, they are more than welcome to come to breakfast as well as lunch.

Peanut-Free Table

There will be table(s) designed as peanut-free in the cafeteria for any children who are allergic to peanuts. ONLY peanut-allergic children may sit at this table. Please notify your child's teacher and the school's nurse, if your child has a peanut allergy.

Cafeteria Volunteers

The Cafeteria is always in need of volunteers to help open packages or bottles for the children during the students' lunch hours (12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.). Please consider signing up for on a

regular basis or as available. This is a great opportunity for grandparents to support the school. If interested, please contact LaTasha Foster at 410-887-1088.

Health and Wellness

Nurse

Heather Denhard
410-887-1091
hdenhard@bcps.org

The school nurse's office is located next to the main office. The nurse is available during all school hours. Please refer to the *Medications* section for more information regarding medications at school, including prescribed and over-the-counter.

Medications

Students are not allowed to bring to school or take home from school medication of any kind. This policy includes over-the-counter medicines, as well as prescription medications. Any and all medications must be handled and overseen by the school nurse. Please contact the school nurse if you have any questions regarding over-the-counter and/or prescription medications

Required Health Forms

Forms and school health information can be found at www.bcps.org. From the home page, choose the drop down menu for 'Our System' and click on 'Offices' then select 'Health Services.' Scroll down to frequently used health forms.

Downloadable documents include the physical exam form and the doctor's order form for medication to be administered in school. These forms are designed and provided for your convenience. However, the doctor or nurse practitioner may use their own forms for medication orders, record of immunizations, and physical exams.

Discretionary Medications

At the beginning of the school year, you will receive a BCPS Consent for Administration of Approved Discretionary Medications form. **This form must be completed, signed, and returned to the school by the parent/legal guardian in order for the child to have any of the following medications made available to them during the school day by the school nurse.**

- Headache/fever/burns/ear ache/muscle ache/pain/cramps: Acetaminophen
- Upset stomach: Chewable Antacid Tablets (like Tums)

- Mild Allergic Reactions: Diphenhydramine (like Benadryl)
- Coughs/sore throats: Cough Drops and/or Throat Lozenges (like Halls)

Over-the-Counter Medications

If a parent comes to school to give their child any medication, they must see our school nurse. The nurse will page your child to the nurse's suite.

Clothing Donations Needed

The school nurse is often in need of clean, gently used clothing in sizes 3T to sizes appropriate for 10-year olds. Throughout the course of each school day, children are sent to the nurse for an assortment of reasons that result in a clothing change. If you have gently used clothing items, please consider donating them to the school nurse. Items especially needed are underwear and socks. Pants, shorts, t-shirts, both short sleeve and long, and sweatshirts are also needed.

Parent/Teacher Communication and Conferences

Board of Education of Baltimore County Philosophy

The Board of Education of Baltimore County (BOE) believes that good communication between parent/guardian and teacher is important to the educational process. The BOE believes that communication between parent/guardian and teacher should be varied and frequent. All forms and methods of communications, such as report cards, interim reports, parent/guardian-teacher conferences, mail, telephone, and prearranged school visits/conferences/meetings by parents/guardians are appropriate and useful and shall be used.

Interpreters Available

Upon request (1-2 weeks in advance), interpreters are available (foreign language and sign language) for all Westchester families that need assistance with Parent Conferences, Special Events, etc. Contact your child's teacher or the front office for more information.

Mailbox Folders

WES provides each student with a Mailbox Folder. The pocket labeled KEEP HOME should be emptied daily. If any papers are in the BRING BACK pocket, please read, sign, and return them to school the next day. It is very important to check this folder daily as it is the school's/teachers' way to communicate with parents. School information, PTA information, and communication from your child's teacher will all come home via the folder and enewsletters. If you need to change your child's dismissal plan, send a conference request, or send in an absent note, please use this folder as a means of communicating back and forth with your child's teacher and the school office. Students turn-in this folder each morning upon entering the classroom.

WES Newsletter

WES has a monthly newsletter. The monthly newsletter is published on the first Thursday of each month. The newsletter includes messages from the principal, assistant principal, and guidance counselor as well as a calendar of events, and special announcements about upcoming school events. Paper copies are sent home in the Thursday folder for those families who have not provided the school with an email. Copies are also available on the school's website at <http://westchesteres.bcps.org>

Parent/ Teacher Communication

There are numerous opportunities for you and your child's teachers to confer:

- Scheduled school conference dates
- Mid-term and report card times
- Teachers and parents can meet anytime the parent, teacher or your child has a subject for discussion

If you would like to schedule a conference:

- Call the teacher at school
- Write a quick note and add to your child's daily work folder or
- E-mail the teacher with a brief request to schedule a conference

The teacher will get in touch with you to set a date and time to meet.

Directory

Every fall the WES PTA produces an electronic directory, which lists all WES families and their contact information - with permission. Parents enter their child's information via the PTA website. Information is compiled in the fall and the electronic directory is sent home in the late fall. All WES families receive a copy of the directory via the PTA newsletter.

Parent Observation/Assistance in the Classroom

In order to further provide for the safety and well-being of our students, WES maintains a locked-door policy with a security system. All visitors/volunteers must buzz in at the front of the school; a front office staff member will let you in. BCPS policy requires that all parents/visitors report to the office to check-in and receive a visitor's badge when they arrive at the school which must be worn throughout the duration of the visit. In addition, parents must have a specific room and teacher to whom they will be reporting. Any volunteer work must be scheduled with a staff member ahead of time (by phone, e-mail, or calendar). Visitors should not walk throughout the school building to other classes or staff – including the administration – without a prior arranged, specific appointment.

School Sponsored Events

Welcome Back Social for Students and Families

Students and their families are encouraged to attend the Welcome Back Social, usually scheduled for a couple days prior to the first day of school. Students are able to bring in their school supplies or pick-up supplies ordered through the PTA. Teachers are available to greet students. There is no formal programming and students are welcome to attend any time during the timeframe provided.

Back to School Night for Parents

This is usually held during the first week in September. **This event is for the parents only;** childcare is not provided. Parents have the opportunity to meet the administration, tour the school, visit your child's classroom, and meet your child's teacher(s). Parents will also have the opportunity to sign-up to help with any of the PTA committees and activities as well as obtain their volunteer training.

Field Day

These days take place each spring. One day is devoted to the primary students – grades Pre-K through second. The second day is devoted to the intermediate students – grades three through five. Information will be sent home as these days approach. Many parent volunteers are needed to help these days run smoothly! Look for more information during the school year.

Field Trips

Field trips are an extension of classroom instruction and enhance BCPS curriculum. Permission slips and money for the field trip are due prior to the date of the trip. A field trip is considered part of the classroom experience and students are expected to go. Students may be prevented from going on a field trip if their behavior in school has been such that an administrator feels the student would create an unsafe environment on a trip away from school. In this case, parents and students will be notified in advance.

If your family cannot afford to send your child(ren) on a field trip, the PTA has a Student Financial Assistance Form. You need to inform your child's teacher, who will submit a form that the principal will sign and the PTA will cover the cost for the student to go on the trip. BCPS Office of Homeless also covers the cost for any student on record as homeless.

We welcome parent chaperones on our field trips. The format of the trips may vary from year-to-year as teachers evaluate and plan for trip itineraries, student safety, and the instructional value of the trip. For safety reasons, we urge all our chaperones to ride the bus with the students in their assigned groups. In addition, as our guidelines, building restrictions and transportation limitations are met, the number of chaperones accompanying our students may be adjusted. There are several things it is important for you to be aware of when you are acting as a chaperone on a field trip. You are assuming the supervisory responsibility for students and their safety:

- Never take students off site without the prior knowledge and approval of the teacher in-charge.
- Cell phones should be left at home, or in your pocket or purse and only used if an emergency arises.
- Since this is an educational activity, **siblings are not allowed to attend**. Other daycare arrangements will need to be made by the parent.
- All chaperones must have completed the annual BCPS volunteer training prior to the field trip.

School Pictures

Individual student pictures are taken in October or early November. Class pictures and individual student pictures are taken in the early spring. Order forms will be sent home before each picture day.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.) Fair

The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.) Fair is BCPS's Science Fair. This takes place each spring and is for all ages.

Special Dress Days

Throughout the school year there will be special dress days where the children can dress in theme to promote school spirit. The themes are given to the students at the beginning of the school year and reminders are sent in the weekly PTA Star News.

School Rewards Programs

Box Tops for Education

There are three ways that you can help WES earn cash through the Box Tops Program:

1. Clip the Box Top Coupons from various General Mills products, put them in a small envelope (vs. a baggie for recycling purposes) and drop them in the Box Top Collection box located in the front office. Each box top is worth 10 cents.
2. Start your online shopping through Box Tops Marketplace. Retailers such as Lands End, Eddie Bauer, Barnes & Noble, KB Toys, Best Buy, Lillian Vernon, Old Navy.com and Target.com will give a percentage of your purchases back to the school. Go to www.boxtops4education.com for a complete list of participating stores and details on how to register. WES will earn up to 8% of each qualifying purchase.
3. Apply for a Box Top Visa card and a full 1% of each purchase goes back to your school.

Giant Bonus Bucks, Safeway/Escrip, and Target Red Card Programs

Giant A+ Bonus Bucks Program: This program runs from early October through early April each year. If you have a Giant Bonus card you can participate in this program and help WES earn cash. You must designate WES with your Giant Bonus card number; this **must** be re-designated **every year**, as the stores do not roll over enrollment. WES ID number is **03605**.

There are several ways that you can designate our school:

- Fill out a designation card at the store's customer service desk.
- Designate online at www.giantfood.com
- Fill out the form that is sent home with the students in September.

Safeway/Escrip: Safeway shoppers may earn cash for WES by designating our school through Escrip. This can be done at the store or logging on to www.escrip.com. WES ID number is **6680213**. You **must** designate your card **every year** as the stores do not rollover enrollment.

Target REDCard: Register your Target REDCard and Target will donate up to 1% of your purchase to WES. To register our TARGET REDCard go to <http://redcard.target.com/> and click on "Take Charge of Education" under "Rewards and Benefits." Next, click on "Enroll in Take Charge of Education." WES ID number is **114721**.

Specials

Instrumental Music

Band and Orchestra are open to any student in the fifth grade AT ANY POINT in the year. Please speak to Ms. Trumpler about enrolling and obtaining an instrument.

This is a pull-out program which means students will miss some class time in order to come to their lessons; however, it is only 40-50 minutes per week. Students are responsible for making up any missed class work.

If a student at WES plays an instrument already or is taking private lessons prior to the fifth grade and would like to participate in the Full Band and Orchestra or at concerts, please see Ms. Trumpler for music and to be a part of the program. Students will not be pulled from academics until they enter fifth grade – per county policy.

All fourth grade students participate in Exploratory Music as a special; they have the opportunity to learn the trumpet, violin, and clarinet. Students are exposed to all instrument families during the year in order to prepare them for instrument selection in fifth grade.

At the end of the Spring Concert, it has become a WES tradition to play “It Don’t Mean A Thing” with the band and orchestra together with past WES Alumni, family, and friends participating, if they desire, using whatever instrument they play. For those interested in participating, please contact Ms. Trumpler for music and an instrument, if necessary.

Library

All students have library class at least once a week. At their second library class, students may checkout 2 books. Books are checked-out for one week and may be renewed, if necessary. Kindergarteners will checkout one picture book after they are oriented to the library and learn proper book care. All students who bring overdue books in after their library day may get a new book at that time. Notices will be sent home for overdue books once a month. Outstanding overdue books will be noted on report cards and a replacement fee will be charged for lost or damaged books at that time. Refunds will be issued for any book found and later returned. Parents are welcome to schedule an appointment with their child(ren)’s librarian to come to a library class and volunteer to help with shelving books or special projects.

Physical Education Class

On days that your child is schedule to attend gym class, please ensure your child wears closed toe tennis shoes/sneakers that fit securely on your child’s foot. Flip flops, Crocs, roller skate tennis shoes, open toed/heel shoes, clogs, sneaker sandals (etc.) are not acceptable and may prohibit your child from participating in gym class.

Volunteers

Parents can volunteer to help in the classroom, on field trips and/or complete special projects for teachers and staff. Individual teachers coordinate parent volunteer efforts in their own classrooms and for field trips.

There are other ways you can get involved. Children learn through contact with parents, adults, and other children. Many of the skills children acquire in kindergarten prepare them for endless success. Classroom volunteers help children begin their journey as lifelong learners.

There are many ways parents can participate in the daily lives of our students by being a volunteer. Volunteers may be asked to:

- Assist the teacher with administrative tasks (cutting, checking backpacks and folders)
- Work with small groups to reinforce skills as directed by the classroom teacher
- Listen and encourage students as they practice reading, math, and other skills
- Read to the class or individual students
- Assist the teacher with supervising students on the playground
- Assist with supervising students during lunch in the cafeteria
- Assist the teacher with supervising students on a field trip

Volunteer Guidelines and Required Training

To ensure a safe and quiet learning environment, infants and younger siblings are **not** permitted in the classrooms while parents are volunteering. Please make arrangements for child care prior to volunteering.

You must fill out an application yearly, and submit it to the office. Once approved, you will receive a letter with instructions to do the training on-line at home. Upon completion, you will print out your certificate and submit it to the office.

State Law requires that all volunteers be trained annually and there will be an orientation meeting in **Child Abuse and Neglect policies and procedures**. You will receive a volunteer handbook.

Catonsville Middle School (CMS) Student Volunteers

WES, in partnership with Catonsville Middle School (CMS), has a program that allows CMS students to participate in a volunteer program at WES. Students wanting to volunteer need to sign-up at CMS along with completing a contract signed by the student, parent and WES staff. The CMS student will be provided with a special badge that must be worn while at WES. Student volunteers will have a set schedule. These assignments will be arranged on a quarterly basis.

Please do not have your CMS student come to WES without assuring the proper paperwork has been completed and a special badge has been assigned. Students who are not on the approved list of volunteers will not be allowed into WES.

Also, please keep in mind that when a middle school student volunteers at WES after school, they are NOT allowed to ride the bus home. Arrangements for their transportation home must be made prior to them volunteering at WES.

Cafeteria Volunteers

The Cafeteria is always in need of volunteers to help open packages or bottles for the children during the students' lunch hours (12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.). Please consider signing up for on a regular basis or as available. This is a great opportunity for grandparents to support the school. If interested, please contact LaTasha Foster at 410-887-1088.

Other Important Information

Bringing Things to School

The only time students should bring toys, games, etc. to school is when they are instructed to do so by their teacher. The student will assume responsibility for any items brought to school. A "Lost & Found" will be maintained throughout the year. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity four times a year (at the end of each marking quarter). Labeling clothing, lunch boxes, book bags, and other belongings with your child's name will help minimize lost items.

Child Care

Before and after school child care is available through Open Door – a private company. Open Door operates within our school and is licensed by the State of Maryland, but is NOT affiliated with the school. For more information regarding the hours and fees call: 410-832-6300 or visit www.opendoorcare.com.

Environmental Issues

Westchester is a Baltimore County Green School. For more information about Baltimore County Schools Green School Program visit:

http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/environment/education/ep_greenschool.html

To support this project please consider helping the PTA Beautification and Green School Committee . More information can be found at <http://wesgreenschool.weebly.com/>

Lost & Found

The Lost & Found is located in the Main Hallway. Please label your child's clothes, mittens, hats, coats, backpacks & lunch boxes.

Parent/ Teacher Association: Communication, Committees, Sponsored Activities & Fundraisers

WES appreciates the leadership and support provided by the PTA. For a complete listing of PTA Board members, please visit <http://westchesterespta.weebly.com/board-members.html>

Monthly Meetings

Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) meetings take place the first Tuesday of every month beginning in October. There is no January meeting. The meetings take place in the Library at 7:00 p.m. *Complimentary childcare is provided.* PTA meetings are a great way to find out what activities and events are approaching; improvements on activities that already took place; the budget; potential activities for the following year, fundraising efforts, parent concerns, etc.

Volunteers

Whether it's holding a board position; chairing or co-chairing a committee; helping on a committee; volunteering your time to help at a function; copying fliers; copying this handbook for distribution; making phone calls for upcoming events, etc. - **the PTA can always use your help!** The WES PTA greatly appreciates any time you can give to your child's school. In order to have activities for the children, parent participation is needed. If you think you might want to chair or co-chair an event in the future, co-chairing the event for a year will show you how the process works. A great place to start is by coming to the monthly PTA meetings and listening to what is happening at WES.

Please take time to look through the below list of PTA activities to see where your comfort level is for participation. **In September, *Back-to-School Night* is held. At this time and anytime during the year as activities approach, please contact either the chairperson for that event or any PTA Board Member to volunteer your help.** Your child(ren) will greatly appreciate your contribution. As you read the lists below, you will see there are many opportunities to volunteer and many jobs to be done for every event at WES. If you would like more information about the PTA, please don't hesitate to e-mail any of the board members. If you would like to volunteer for a specific committee, please contact the committee chair.

Communication: PTA Star News

The PTA sends a weekly newsletter called **Star News** every Tuesday via our Electronic system Constant Contact. The Star News includes important announcements, updates on upcoming school activities and events, important forms and sign-up sheets, information about fundraisers, Star Volunteer awards, messages from the PTA Board and grade specific information. To sign up for the PTA enews, please visit the WES website at <http://westchesterespta.weebly.com/> and use the sign up box. Enter your email address in the box and click "join." It will lead you to a page to enter additional information.

Once you sign up, you can begin receiving newsletters, fliers and other correspondence regarding school events. Incoming kindergarten families are encouraged to sign up early to receive summer newsletter

PTA Committees

For a current and complete list of committees and contacts, please visit <http://westchesterespta.weebly.com/pta-officers-and-committees.html>

Cultural Committee: This involves one person working over the summer and during the school year with a school staff member to coordinate cultural school assemblies. The chairperson does not need to be present at the assemblies.

Beautification and Green School Committee: This committee is responsible for maintaining WES Green School designation as well as facilitating projects to beautify the school. More information can be found at <http://wesgreenschool.weebly.com/>

Kids Club: This committee coordinates the after school programs at WES. The program offers after school activities for all grades at WES. During the 2014-2015 school year we offered a variety of clubs in the arts and sciences. Registration begins in late August and again in mid-December. 10-week fall term classes start in September. 10-week winter term classes start in January. We are always seeking parents to assist us supervise students after school.

Membership Committee: This is very busy at the beginning of the school year. This committee is in charge of promoting PTA membership by sending home fliers with membership envelopes. Once the envelopes are returned, there is money to count and membership totals to tally. They also organize a class and staff contest to encourage parents, grandparents, family members, and teachers to join.

New Student Committee: This is a committee of Westchester parents who are interested in welcoming and helping new families to our school. This committee provides refreshments for Kindergarten Round-Up/Registration in the spring. Volunteers are needed to serve refreshments and serve as greeters to the new parents and children coming to register. This committee is also responsible for the Boo Hoo Breakfast at the beginning of the school year and updates the WES Handbook each year.

Picture Parent: This program exposes children to art. Parent volunteers are needed during the school day to present information to the children in their classrooms on various forms of art. The art and information to be presented is already developed and easy to follow.

School Directory Committee: Every fall the WES PTA produces an electronic directory, which lists all WES families and their contact information - with permission. Parents enter their child's information via the PTA website. Information is compiled in the fall and the electronic directory is sent home in the late fall. All WES families receive a copy of the directory via the PTA newsletter.

Staff Appreciation Committee: This committee coordinates and delivers gifts for the school staff on various recognition days (Nurse's Day, Custodians' Day, Secretary's Day, etc.) They also hold a luncheon for the teachers in the spring during Teacher Appreciation Week.

PTA Activities

Welcome Back Social: This is held before school starts and coincides with WES' Open House. During the afternoon, students are invited to come in, tour the school, find their classroom, meet their teacher, and enjoy a PTA-provided snack. Volunteers are needed to set up, serve snacks, and clean up.

Boo Hoo Breakfast: This is held the first ½ day for all kindergarten students. It will take place in the cafeteria for all new kindergarten parents to meet, greet, and socialize.

Movie Night: This is a fun night to gather with your classmates and family at WES and watch a family movie, complete with concessions!

Fall Festival: This is a big day at WES featuring arts and crafts, games, music, entertainment, food, and our famous “Haunted Hallway.” Many, many volunteers are needed for every aspect of this event. Many fliers are sent home in advance to publicize the festival and seek volunteers. The Festival may alternate years.

Grandparents Breakfast: This is an exciting morning for the grandparents to accompany their grandchild(ren) to breakfast in the cafeteria/gym of WES. Breakfast is from 8:30 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. Photographers are on-hand to take family photos that make a great gift for parents. This event takes place during American Education Week. Grandparents are welcome to escort their grandchild back to his/her classroom after the breakfast and sit-in the classroom for some of the morning activities.

Beach Night: This is an exciting night with music provided by the Catonsville High School Steel Drum Band. This takes place after the December holiday break; usually in January. WES families and friends gather to eat dinner and dance the night away. Tickets are sold in advance. Due to the popularity of this event and the limited space available, this event is for WES families only. A flyer will be sent home with your student when tickets are available.

Fourth of July Float: This committee coordinates the building and presentation of the float in the Catonsville parade. Many volunteers are needed to decorate the float as well as walk with the float during the parade.

PTA Fundraisers

Both the PTA and the school conduct separate fundraisers. The PTA fundraisers raise money to support myriad causes: teacher and staff appreciation, family fun nights, community outreach, assemblies, end-of-year activities, assisting needy students, student agendas and purchasing various student, staff and school needs.

School fundraisers – see “School Fundraisers”

Direct Donation: Families can make a direct donation to WES or WES PTA as opposed to participating in the fundraising events (selling, purchasing, attending, etc.).

Book Fair: The PTA hosts two Book Fairs- a small fair in the Fall to coincide with Grandparents’ Day and pre-holiday shopping and a second week- long event in the spring. During the spring book fair, classes are given scheduled times to preview and shop at the book fair. Many volunteers are needed to set-up the Library, oversee the Book Fair each day and clean up.

Marquee Madness: This is for parents who would like their child’s birthday recognized on the outside board located outside the front of the school, close to Old Frederick Road. The PTA offers to post your child’s birthday using their first name and last initial. The service cost is \$10 for a week (Sunday – Saturday). A flyer will be sent home with the students during the first week of school for those interested in signing-up.

Chairperson: Christina Jimenez 21loopy@gmail.com

Parents Night Out: The largest fundraiser for the PTA occurs in March every year. Parents Night Out is a social event held at the Phoenix Emporium in Ellicott City. Tickets are sold for the

event. Drink and food specials are offered. A wonderful silent auction is offered through the support of local businesses and grade level donations.

Spirit Wear Committee: This committee coordinates the sale of fall and spring Spirit Wear as well as Special Dress Days throughout the year. While they only meet two to three times a year, many volunteers are needed to help with the distribution of fliers, and distribute the spirit wear. They are always looking for new ideas and suggestions to promote WES Spirit.
Chairperson: Patti Schwartz pattips@verizon.net

School Rewards: This activity runs throughout the year and includes Box Tops for Education, Campbell's Soup Labels and bonus cards at Safeway, Giant, and Target. Please see the Schools rewards section for more details.
See "School Rewards" section for more information.

Food Nights: Throughout the year, the WES PTA will sponsor "Westchester Food Nights" at various local restaurants. A portion of the night's sales will benefit the PTA. Recent Food nights have been held at Chipolte, Sweet Frog, Applebee's, Peace a Pizza, Bob Evans, and Chick-fil-a. It's great to eat out, see your friends, & support the PTA!

Kindergarten Information

First Week of School for Kindergarten Students

Kindergarteners will be gradually introduced to attending full-day school. Parents and their child(ren) are to attend the orientation sessions on the first or second day of school as indicated in the school calendar. At this time, the teacher will make a presentation to the parents - give an overview of the BCPS Kindergarten program to the parents - while the children have the opportunity to explore their new classroom.

Orientation:

Day 1 (eg. Wednesday) from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. last names beginning with A through L.

Day 2 (eg. Thursday) from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. last names beginning with M through Z.

Half-Days for Kindergarteners the first week of school:

Day 3 (eg. Friday) from 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. No afternoon bus service is provided.*

First Full-Day for Kindergartners with bus service to and from school:

9:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. (See school calendar—likely Monday)

Arrival Procedures for Kindergarten Students during the first week of school:

During the first week of school, all students (bus riders, car riders, and walkers) enter the school at the front door entrance between 9:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. Kindergarten teachers will meet students at the front entrance and line-up by class before walking the children to their individual rooms. After the first week of school, students will enter the building through the front doors and proceed to their classrooms aided by the school safety patrol and teacher monitors positioned along the hallways. If your child arrives at or after 9:15 a.m., he/she will need to stop by the main office to get a late slip before going to class (see late arrival section for specifics). Parents of walkers and car riders will need to say their goodbyes at the front door to the school on the half-days and full-days of school.

Dismissal Procedures for Kindergarten Students during the first week of school

Your child(ren) will receive a backpack tag at orientation. This needs to be worn throughout the school year on the outside of the child's backpack. The tag identifies the child's teacher as well as his/her dismissal procedure.

At dismissal, car riders will walk to the gym and then outside to the side parking lot. Teacher monitors will stay with the children, and as your car pulls around in the line, open the door for him/her. **You do not have to leave your car.**

Walkers will leave the classroom and meet parents by the front west side door next to the two kindergarten playground.

Bus riders will wait in their classrooms with their teachers until called to the front lobby on the intercom. Fifth graders will walk the students outside and adults check off names to insure that each kindergarten child gets safety on the correct bus.

If your child's dismissal procedure should change on any given day, please send the front office a note or email (jbaldwin3@bcps.org and mliptrap@bcps.org). Please DO NOT call the school or send in a request for your child to ride a different bus.

Independence Day

Parents are welcome to escort their Kindergarten children to class in the morning during the first full week of school to get them used to the morning routines. The children then celebrate their independence on the Monday following this first full week of school. This is the day that the students celebrate their independence as they are now "big kids" and go to their classes on their own, without an adult accompanying them. Please check the school communications for the official date of Independence Day.

Kindergarten Conferences

Kindergarten parents will have 2 parent-teacher conferences; a Progress Report card will be issued prior to each conference. The conferences are held in the fall and spring allowing teachers to share individual learning profiles of your child using information from the *Kindergarten Progress Report*. Teachers provide parents/guardians with a global look at their child and share anecdotal notes and work samples that support the child's specific strengths and needs.

Registration

Children must be five years old by September 1 of the start of the school year in order to register for Kindergarten. Registration takes place each spring during Kindergarten Roundup. Only the parent or legal guardian may register the child.

Documents required in order to complete your child's registration include:

- **One** of these items: A deed **OR** lease to home **OR** a property tax bill in the parent/legal guardian's name.
- **Three** of these items: Three separate pieces of mail, addressed to the parent/legal guardian with the address used to register the child. All utility bills are accepted (cell phone, natural gas, electric, heating oil, phone, cable). No magazines or junk mail will be accepted.

- **A photo ID. The address on your photo ID must match the address of the registering student.**

These are BCPS system procedures and we must adhere to these regulations with **no exceptions**. In order for each student to be fully registered, we must have all of the above documents. Kindergarten Roundup/Registration is normally held in March or April. Please contact the office at 410-887-1088 after March 1 to schedule an appointment for registration.

Special Occasions

In kindergarten, class field trips enhance our curriculum and add a touch of fun as well! We plan to visit a pumpkin farm in the fall. Additional trips may be added as they become available.

See "PTA Sponsored Events" for other Kindergarten focused events

Star Student

Starting in the fall a different Kindergarten student is chosen in each class on Fridays to be the Star Student for the upcoming week. The teacher will send home a school provided poster which the child will work on at home over the weekend. The teacher will also send home a letter outlining what items(s) the child needs to bring each day (i.e. favorite book or toy). A student is very proud when it is their week to be the "Star Student."

Supply List

Kindergarteners are also expected to have their own supplies. A list of supplies will be mailed to the parents about a month before school starts. It is important that your child's supplies are labeled with their first and last name. These items will be kept in their cubby in their classroom.

Supplies

All school supplies should be labeled and sent to class by the first full Tuesday of the school year. Your child's clothes, mittens, hats, gloves, scarf, coat, jacket, backpack, and lunch should also be labeled with their name. If a misplaced item is found, it is put in the Lost & Found located in the vocal music hallway. Backpacks should be large enough to carry the following: a plastic Mailbox folder without bending it; winter gear; lunchbox; books. Please do not send in backpacks with wheels. All folders should have bottom pockets, not side pockets.

Volunteers

In kindergarten there are many jobs to be done and the teachers are always looking for an extra pair of hands! A sign-up sheet will be placed outside of each classroom. Parents, guardians, aunt, uncles are all invited to come in to help after they have completed the required annual BCPS volunteer training. The mornings are our busiest times, but we could always use help in the afternoons, as well. Each class also needs a class parent or two to help coordinate special events. Chaperones will be needed for class trips and must have completed the annual required BCPS volunteer training prior to the field trip.

