



**Student/Parent  
Handbook**

2021-22 School Year

**Farnsworth  
Middle School**

2021-22 School Year

*Farnsworth Middle School Student/Parent Handbook*

Hiawatha | Mohawk | Seneca | Tawasentha

Hiawatha | Mohawk | Seneca | Tawasentha

## Welcome to the new school year

The Alton U. Farnsworth Middle School (FMS) Student/Parent Handbook contains information about our school and the policies and procedures you and your child will need to be familiar with for a successful school year. In it you will find information pertaining to:

- Your child's grades and interim reports
- Conferences with your child's teachers
- The attendance policy
- FMS Code of Conduct
- And much more!

The information contained in this handbook is important. We ask that you please read it with your child, assisting him/her with understanding its contents. If you have any further questions about anything contained in this handbook, please contact the Building Principal or one of our House Principals at their telephone extensions, or by e-mail (see page 3).



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Students can also obtain school information by visiting the Guilderland Central School District website at [www.guilderlandschools.org](http://www.guilderlandschools.org). The site includes information on upcoming activities, class schedules, sports schedules, school news, academic achievements, policy information and a school calendar.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Directory of School Staff

The Guilderland Board of Education is committed to maintaining a continuing public information program. You will be able to reach any of the following individuals during school business hours (8:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.) by dialing 456-6010 and then, at the prompt, the desired extension. Staff can also be accessed through e-mail by using last name, first initial@guilderlandlandschools.net (e.g., lasterm@guilderlandlandschools.net). (BOE policy 1100)

### Important telephone numbers:

Farnsworth Middle School . . . . . (518) 456-6010  
Building Principal . . . . . Michael Laster (Ext. 3010)

#### HOUSE PRINCIPALS

Hiawatha 6 - 8 . . . . . William Aube (Ext. 3041)  
Seneca 6 - 8 . . . . . Kelly Willets (Ext. 3060)  
Tawasentha 6 - 8 . . . . . Kelly Willets (Ext. 3060)  
Mohawk 6 & 7 . . . . . William Aube (Ext. 3041)  
Mohawk 8 . . . . . Michael Laster (Ext. 3041)

#### HOUSE SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Hiawatha, Mohawk . . . . . Anna Bartlett (Ext. 3054)  
Seneca, Tawasentha . . . . . Chris Jager (Ext. 3038)  
Tawasentha, Mohawk . . . . . Danielle Heigel (Ext. 3036)

### Whom do I contact about...?

Athletics . . . . . Dave Austin, (518) 861-8591 (Ext. 4000)  
Bus Schedule . . . . . Transportation, (518) 861-6434  
Cafetorium/Meal Information . . . . . Megan Bates (518) 456-6200 (Ext. 3110)  
Courses - Curricula . . . . . Art/FACS: Shannon Elliott (Ext. 3091)  
. . . . . English/Reading/Social Studies: Roy Dumar (Ext. 3089)  
. . . . . Physical Education/Health: Dave Austin (Ext. 3033)  
. . . . . World Languages/Cultures & ENL: Marcia Ranieri (Ext. 3031)  
. . . . . Math/Science/Technology: Beverly Bisnett-Jenks (Ext. 3089)  
. . . . . Music: Robert Winans (Ext. 3033)  
Custodial Supervisor . . . . . Brian Castle (Ext. 3099)  
Enrichment/Gifted Programming . . . . . Roy Dumar (Ext. 3089)  
Special Education Services . . . . . Audrey Douglas and Meghan Rivers (Ext. 3051)  
School Nurses . . . . . Beth Ford and Angela Salavantis (Ext. 3015/3017)  
Use of Building . . . . . Kelly Willets (Ext. 3060)

### Parent Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are an effective means of communication between the home and the school. These conferences provide an opportunity for open communication regarding student progress, instructional programs, goals and objectives, and administrative procedures. (BOE Policy 4714) Parents may initiate a conference by calling the house office at any point in the year and making an appointment with the house secretary. When a parent requests a conference with a teacher, the teacher will make every effort to arrange a mutually convenient time. Such conferences will be planned around the teacher's schedule so as not to interfere with class time. If a parent cannot attend a scheduled conference, he/she should notify the school as far in advance as possible so that another conference time may be arranged.

## INSTRUCTION & INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

### DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Guilderland Central School District's mission is to inspire all students to be active life-long learners, able to achieve their highest potential in a demanding and ever-changing global community.

### DISTRICT EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Board of Education believes that the Guilderland Central School District is dedicated to the service of its students, their families and the entire community. To this end we will be attentive and responsive to the diverse needs of all. By serving our students we mean to empower them for success and effectiveness both now and throughout their lives. Our purposes for students include:

- Developing and cultivating the full range of human intelligences and capabilities;
- Instilling the habits of mind and dispositions of character needed to use understanding wisely and humanely;
- Developing the skills necessary to live, work and succeed in our own democratic society and an ever-changing community;

- Encouraging the development of each individual's unique expression while fostering the development of lifelong respect for others.

Our aim is to assure that each student will become a self-initiating, life-long learner and a contributing, productive member of society.

In order to achieve this, we require our schools to encourage and foster a learning environment where students work alone and with others to evaluate, construct, and generate knowledge. Students are supported in taking risks and thinking independently.

Staff members are expected to direct their energies to doing what is necessary to meet our students' needs. The district actively supports employee efforts to improve their professional practice aimed at learning and implementing effective ways in which to meet students' needs.

Recognizing that the whole community is affected by its schools, the Board of Education encourages participation and conversations about what students are learning, what schools and families are seeking to do, and what the community needs. We will operate in an arena of collaboration and partnership. Our actions and relationships will foster mutual

respect, trust, and support. We will make decisions based on what we believe is good and on what we know is effective in enhancing the full range of human development. (BOE policy 1000)

## **FARNSWORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

Farnsworth Middle School, a New York State School to Watch, is an exciting learning community: thoughtful, stimulating, reflective, engaging and engaged. The staff balances challenging curriculum goals with its understanding of the unique intellectual, social-emotional, and physical needs of 11-14 year olds. In partnership with families and community, we support and nurture students in their development of a love for learning, strong habits of the mind and body, a commitment to high academic standards, an appreciation for the arts, an understanding of democratic principles, respect for self and others, and responsibility for their actions.

Farnsworth Middle School students successfully make the transition from elementary to high school. All students use their minds well, think critically and creatively, make informed and reasoned judgments, produce and invent, critique and analyze, develop personal responsibility and concern for others, and move toward greater independence as learners.

## **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION/ANTI-HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of the Guilderland Central School District not to permit discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, economic status, marital status, sexual orientation or disability in the district's educational programs, activities or employment.

Harassment may take the form of comments, name-calling, jokes, stalking, perpetuating rumors or gossip, offensive gestures or language, assault or any other behavior that is designed to annoy, intimidate or cause fear.

Bullying and/or hazing of students and staff are prohibited behaviors and will not be tolerated at Farnsworth Middle School.

New York's Dignity for All Students Act and Guilderland Central School District's policy #5010 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, gender, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, military status or marital status and will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment. Any parent, student or district employee who believes they have been discriminated against based upon race, color, gender, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, military status or marital status should contact one of the district's Dignity Act Coordinators:

District-wide Coordinator  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Instruction Demian Singleton,  
456-6200, ext. 3119

Principal Michael Laster  
House Principals  
Bill Aube and  
Kelly Willetts, 456-6010

## **INSTRUCTION**

The development and maintenance of optimal educational programs are the primary functions of the Guilderland Board of Education. (BOE Policy 4000)

### **Daily Schedule**

Walkers and students arriving before 9:02 a.m. must report directly to the cafetorium unless a pre-arranged meeting is in place. Please be aware the building does not officially open until 8:00 a.m., this is when supervision begins.

Buses unload.....8:55 a.m.

Students must be in

homeroom..... 9:02 a.m.

Attendance and Pledge of Allegiance

1<sup>st</sup> dismissal to buses.....3:31 p.m.

Mon, Tues, Wed late bus dismissal

to buses.....4:05 p.m.

### **Breakfast Program 8 - 9:15 a.m.**

Upon arrival at school, students will be offered the option of eating breakfast. Breakfast will be served from 8 to 8:45 a.m. Any student arriving at 8:45 a.m. in need of breakfast should report first to homeroom before going to the cafetorium. Students will be dismissed from the cafetorium to arrive in homeroom by 8:55 a.m. All food and beverages must be

consumed in the cafetorium.

### **Activity Period 3:31 - 4:05 p.m.**

Activity period at FMS is on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Activity periods are part of the school day. Students may be required to stay for help with schoolwork, detention, or other extensions of the school program. Students may stay for enrichment with teachers, extra help, participation in clubs and intramural activities, etc. Students may only stay for activity period as part of a supervised program. Only students staying for one of these activities may ride the 4:05 p.m. bus. Students and parents need to be clear about the student's plan prior to arrival at school. Student access to the phone will be limited to emergency situations only.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is a critical factor in school success for our students. Consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion are positively related. School attendance is both a right and a responsibility in New York State. Children have the right to attend school between the ages of 5 and 21, and are mandated to attend between the ages of 6 and 16. Parents are expected to make sure that their children attend school on a regular basis. (BOE Policy 5100)

It is each student's basic responsibility as a member of the school community to be on time

and attend all classes. To report a child's absence from school, please call or e-mail your child's house office secretary. Daily telephone calls will be made to parents or guardians to report unexcused absences.

## Excused and Unexcused Absences

The following reasons for student absences from school are recognized as excused:

- Personal illness
- Illness or death in the family
- Impassable roads or weather making travel unsafe
- Religious observance
- Medical appointment
- Approved school-sponsored trips
- Quarantine
- Required court appearances

Any other absence is considered unexcused. Students returning to school following an absence should submit a written excuse stating the reason(s) for his or her absence to the House Principal.

The district will support and encourage a student's efforts to maintain or improve school attendance. Students with unexcused absences will be disciplined according to the provisions set forth in the district's Code of Conduct.

## Late Arrivals

Students who arrive late must enter through the front door near the reception area and the Main Office and immediately sign in at their House Office.

## Student Dismissal Precautions

In order to ensure students' safety, House Principals maintain a list of individuals who are authorized to obtain the release of students in attendance at the school. No student may be released to the custody of any individual who is not the parent or guardian of the student, unless the individual's name appears on that list. We encourage all parents to update their child's student profile on our SchoolTool parent portal.

Certified copies of any court orders or divorce decrees provided by the custodial parent, which restrict a parent's ability to seek the release of his or her child, shall be maintained in district offices.

## Early Release

Early release should be kept to a minimum as it disrupts the educational process. Early release of students should be requested in writing by the parent and submitted to the House Principal. If anyone seeks the release from school of a student, he/she must report to the reception area located next to the Main Office on the first floor and present satisfactory identification to the receptionist. If the person seeking the release of a child exhibits to the school official an out-of-state custody order, the Building Principal or the Building Principal's designee will be called.

## LEARNING CENTER

Farnsworth students receive instruction in the research process through various units in the cur-



riculum. They are led by certified library media specialists who teach students how to think critically when interacting with information in varying formats.

The Learning Center is open every school day and is equipped with books, magazines, Internet access, online databases, and other educational resources. Students may come to the Learning Center during class, Access, or activity period with a pass from a teacher.

Materials in the library circulate for a specific period of time, generally three weeks. All students wishing to borrow materials must check them out at the library desk.

Students are expected to be responsible and courteous of the needs of others and return library materials on time. Lost or damaged materials must be replaced at the expense of the borrower.

## **MULTIMEDIA TOOLS IN THE CLASSROOM**

Increasingly, non-print media—including television, music video, videotape, film, radio, compact disc, and hypertext for personal computers—have become primary sources of information and recreation, as well as emotional and artistic experiences for Americans.

Today's children come to school from homes and communities which provide them with a wide exposure to non-print media. It is crucial that teachers draw upon this background both to

recognize their students' knowledge and to develop their students' critical thinking about non-print media.

Students must develop the knowledge, critical awareness, and technical skills to become participants in, creators of, thinkers about, and commentators on the non-print media that are so pervasive an influence on their lives. This means that teachers may sometimes use potentially controversial materials to help students confront issues such as stereotyping, propagandizing, and editorializing in the media. As educators, we are aware of and sensitive to the needs and perceptions of middle-age students. These materials are never selected to expose students to gratuitous violence or sexuality. Instead, such materials may be chosen to allow students to discover that non-print media works are various constructions of reality, and that they may have commercial, ideological, and value-laden messages.

Educators have included the study of film and video in their classrooms for decades. The school district affirms that the purpose of including these materials is to:

- Support the development of students' print literacy and appreciation of print literature by building on students' informally acquired media literacy skills;
- Study artistic and informa-

tive works in their own right;

- Deepen students' abilities to understand and to critically analyze the powerful non-print media sources of their daily information and entertainment.

Film or video used for instructional purposes has to meet specific selection criteria. Parents will be notified if potential controversy related to language, violence, drug and alcohol abuse or sexual issues exists. Parents will also receive notification of all health videos and units before they are shown. (BOE Policy 4512)

## **USE OF SCHOOL COMPUTERS AND INTERNET**

The Guilderland Board of Education considers computers to be a valuable tool for education, and encourages the use of computers and computer-related technology in classrooms.

Computer use is an integral part of the curriculum and the use of software applications, online databases, bulletin boards and electronic mail significantly enhance a student's educational experience.

To this end, the Board extends the privilege of using computers to access the Internet to help perform academic work, to explore educational topics, to conduct research projects, and to contact others in the educational world. The privilege of using the comput-

ers in the school may be revoked at any time if a student fails to comply with the Board's policy and regulations. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in the event of violations of this policy. (BOE Policy 4510.2)

### **GCS D Engaged Learning Initiative (ELI) through 1:1 Chromebook Model**

The Engaged Learning Initiative (ELI) aligns with the district's vision and mission by providing students in grades 5-12 with regular, equitable access to digital learning tools in school and at home.

Students will receive a Chromebook for in-school and at-home use at the start of every school year. Students will be expected to bring their Chromebooks to school every day and to use them for all computer-based school assignments. There is no fee to families unless a student's Chromebook is damaged, lost or stolen -- the same policy as for textbooks. For full information on the initiative, please refer to the Educational Technology Department's website, accessible through the district website.

### **Acceptable Use Policy**

An acceptable use policy for student use of the district's computer network is sent home annually. It describes the student's access to the network and expectations for acceptable use. Parents are expected to review this agree-

ment with their child. Failure to abide by these regulations may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension from school and/or revocation of system access and related privileges.

Staff and students are expected to follow these guidelines when using computers:

- School computers may only be used to help perform academic work, explore educational topics, conduct research projects or contact others for educational purposes.
  - When using school computers, students and staff will be expected to take reasonable care of school equipment and materials.
  - Students and staff are expected to act in a responsible, ethical and legal manner while using school computers and the Internet. They should be polite to Internet users and should act within the laws of New York State and the U.S.
  - No purchase may be made via a computer owned by the school, or through one of the school's Internet accounts.
  - Students will be supervised when they access the Internet. The school will take every reasonable precaution to ensure that a student will not access objectionable materials. Students will be instructed to notify a teacher immediately if they accidentally access something objectionable from a school computer.
  - Students will be told not to provide personal information or agree to meet strangers that they meet on the Internet. Students should notify a teacher if someone on the Internet requests personal information or asks to meet with them.
  - In accordance with the district's "opt-out" policy for the use of student directory information, web page documents on the Internet may include a student's full name, grade level, photograph, art work, academic interest, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, terms of school attendance and graduation, awards received, etc. unless the district has been notified in writing not to publish this information in any given school year.
  - Information stored on school computer equipment is not private and may be viewed or traced by authorized personnel.
- Staff and students must understand that if they violate these rules, their computer privileges may be suspended. Violations of these guidelines will result in a referral to school administration for further disciplinary action.



## District Responsibilities

While the district uses technological and manual means to regulate access and information on the school computer network, parents should understand that these methods do not provide a fool-proof means of enforcing the provisions of the district's policy and regulations.

The district makes no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, for the access being provided. Further, the district assumes no responsibility for the quality, availability, accuracy, nature or reliability of the service and/or information provided. Use of the district's computer network and the Internet is performed at the user's own risk. Each user is responsible for verifying the integrity and authenticity of the information that is used and provided.

The district will not be responsible for any damages suffered by any user, including but not limited to, loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by its own negligence or the errors or omissions of any user. The district will also not be responsible for the unauthorized financial obligations resulting from the use or access to the district's computer network or the Internet. (BOE Policy 4510.2)

## INTERNET SAFETY

The Guilderland Central School District is committed to safeguarding children's access to

the Internet and World Wide Web on district computers. Although Guilderland Central School District cannot totally guarantee the effectiveness of selected filtering and blocking technology, the district will use such measures that block or filter Internet access to visual depictions that are obscene or otherwise harmful to minors, as defined in the Children's Internet Protection Act. In addition, Internet safety is part of the sixth grade technology program.

## Student E-mail Accounts

All middle school students are issued a secure district e-mail account through the Google Apps for Education service. This account is intended for instructional purposes. Students may only send messages to and receive messages from other GCS D students and staff members.

## DISTRICT WEBSITE

Internet access in the Guilderland Central School District provides an opportunity for students, staff, parents, and the community to share information in a very unique way. The district's website provides information to the community about school curriculum, instruction, school-related activities, and other general information relating to our schools and our district's mission. Internet access for the creation of web pages is provided by the district Web Team through Capital Region BOCES.

Creators of web pages on the Guilderland Central School dis-

trict's website need to familiarize themselves with, and adhere to, the district's published website guidelines in order to receive and retain authoring privileges on the district website or to have an independent website linked to the district website.

Students may create new web pages or modify existing web pages only as part of a classroom or club activity with the authorization of a designated staff member. The web pages may only be placed on the district web server with approval from the network administrator. (BOE Policy 4510.2-R.2)

## **SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES**

The school district recognizes the value of certain ceremonies and observances in promoting patriotism and good citizenship among the students. Therefore, activities in schools commemorating national holidays such as Memorial Day, Thanksgiving and President's Day are encouraged. Guilderland Central School District reminds students, faculty and administration of the variety of religious beliefs, and all are urged to be conscious of and respect the sensitivities of others.

Activities related to a religious holiday or theme will be planned to ensure that the activity is not devotional, and that students of all faiths can join without feeling that

they are betraying their own beliefs.

Therefore, keep in mind the following:

- School and class plays shall be secular and nonsectarian in nature. Although school and class plays may have religious content, the purpose may not be to promote or endorse a specific religious belief.
- Although religious music may be played and/or sung to demonstrate the cultural significance of such art forms, the Guilderland Central School District will not permit such music to entirely dominate the district's music program or concerts.
- Program notes and illustrations of a religious nature shall not be included if the purpose or effect is to encourage students and community members to accept and/or follow such religious teachings.

Students shall be given the option to be excused from participating in those parts of a program involving a religious theme which conflicts with their own religious beliefs. If a parent or student has any questions regarding the use of religious music, artwork and/or symbols in a particular course/activity, the Building Principal should be contacted.

## **ASSEMBLIES**

Student assemblies are seen as part of the overall educational process. School assemblies, at all instructional levels, are often held to

provide recognition of student accomplishments by peers, parents and staff members. Assemblies will be appropriate to the educational experience, as defined by the Guilderland Central School Board of Education, and reflect our school's educational mission.

Students are reminded of proper conduct at assemblies to ensure responsible audience participation:

- Take an assigned seat quietly;
- Do not speak above a whisper, and then only when necessary;
- Pay attention to the speaker/performer(s);
- Applaud only when appropriate.

## **SCHOOL LOCKERS AND LOCKS**

All students will be assigned a locker to secure their belongings. Students assigned lockers in Hiawatha, Mohawk and Tawasen-tha will need to use a free-hanging combination lock to secure their lockers. Students in Seneca will be assigned lockers with integrated locks (no need for free-hanging lock). Please note that school lockers are not the private property of students but the property of the school district and as such may be opened and subject to inspection from time to time by school officials (BOE policy 5330). School-issued locks allow for a keyed entry

by school officials. For safety/security reasons, school officials may need to cut-off privately purchased locks to gain access.

- Students are responsible for the contents of their lockers and are encouraged to use a school-issued lock.
- The school is not responsible for items that are lost or stolen.
- Students should keep all valuables in a locked locker.
- Students should not share lock combinations with other students.

FMS Students will be assigned hallway lockers this year to store their personal belongs. We will not be using our PE locker rooms again this year. Students will need to bring in a combination lock for their Homeroom Locker. Homeroom teachers will keep the combination on file to help students who might forget the combination.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

GCSD believes that the physical education program should:

- Aid the development of a student's mind by encouraging the development of a healthy body;
- Encourage student participation in appropriate physical activity while in school and to teach the skills of those activities so that they will carryover to activities throughout their lifetime;
- Increase appreciation of physical fitness and its importance in regard to good health;
- Impress upon students the importance of integrating one's mind, body, and attitude in preparing to face the challenges life presents;
- Instill self-respect, self-discipline, and the value of cooperation and teamwork which are essential elements of good citizenship.

With these objectives in mind, the P.E. staff works with admins to develop a physical education program that develops each student's flexibility, agility, coordination, strength, and endurance incorporating a progression of skills and activities from the simple to the more complex. This program is flexible enough to accept each student with his/her own pattern of growth an development and includes activities that ensure both individual and group develop-

ment throughout the student's school years.

Every student who attends school must take part in a physical education program. If a student requires a special or adaptive physical education program, he/she should notify the school counselor and P.E. teacher as soon as possible. A note from the student's physician may also be required. (BOE Policy 4316)

If a student must be excused from P.E. classes for less than a week either due to minor injuries or upon returning to school following an illness, the student must deliver a note from the parent to the physical education teacher.

If a student must be excused from P.E. for more than a week, that student must deliver a note from his/her physician to the school nurse.

### Proper Attire for PE Class

Students are expected to dress appropriately in order to participate in physical education classes. All students are required to wear sneakers for safety and performance reasons.

## MUSIC

### Performing Music Ensembles

In 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, all students at FMS take general music every other day for one semester and receive a grade at the end of the semester.

FMS offers grade level and co-curricular ensembles in band, chorus, and orchestra. All students (regardless of previous experience)

are invited to participate in the program. Ensembles meet as a class every other day during normal school hours and students are graded on achievement in lessons and rehearsals.

The music directors will work to create and maintain a high level of performance, foster motivation to perform, and develop teamwork within the group. For students to gain performance experience it is required that they attend rehearsal regularly and participate in concerts. Although evening concerts are beyond the school day, they are a vital component of the musical experience and a culminating event that cannot be made up. A written excuse from a parent or legal guardian is required in the event that a student misses a performance for any reason. In the case of illness, or family emergency, the parent should contact the director as soon as possible.

### **Instrumental Lessons/Private Lessons**

All band and orchestra students receive a small group music lesson once a week, 40 minutes in length. The lesson meets on the same day each week but times may rotate. Music lessons are considered an excused absence and students are responsible to make up missed class work. On the morning of the lesson, the student picks up a lesson card with the assigned lesson time. This card is shown to the classroom teacher and is used as a pass.

### **Instrument Storage**

Students may store their instruments in the band or orchestra room.

The student's name should be clearly visible on the instrument case. Keep a record of the model number and serial number of the instrument. Many homeowner policies cover musical instruments in school. FMS is not responsible for lost or stolen property.

### **Commitment to the ensemble**

Students in performing music ensembles are making a commitment to the ensemble and other members of the team. The success of any organization is dependent upon the spirit, pride, leadership, teamwork, dedication, and cooperation of its members. While students all develop at different rates, students are encouraged to put forth their best efforts and honor their commitment for the school year.

## **SCHOOL COUNSELING/ SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

The Counseling Department recognizes the importance of each child's academic, social, and emotional needs as related to the developmental stages of student growth.

In partnership with our students, staff, families and community, we will empower students to become effective learners, achieve success in school and develop into contributing members of our diverse society.

Counseling/social work services are available to all students in grades 6-8.



## SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

### PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities are entitled to receive, at public expense, special education, related services and/or supplementary aids and services as necessary to ensure a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, appropriate to meet their individual needs.

Each student identified as having a disability will have access to the full range of programs and services of this school district, including extracurricular programs and activities, which are available to all other students enrolled in the public schools of the district. (BOE Policy 4321)

Parents/students who desire further information on the program should contact Instructional Administrator for Special Education, Meghan Rivers and/or CSE Chairperson Audrey Douglas. (ext. 3051)

### ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE (ENL)

Students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, have limited English proficiency will be more effective learners of both the language and the curriculum if they receive instruction in both their native language and English.

The district will therefore make every effort to ensure that English as a New Language (ENL) students are provided with an appropriate transitional program of bilingual education or ENL. (BOE Policy 4326)

Parents/students who desire further information on the ENL program should contact the Instructional Administrator for World Languages & ENL, Marcia Ranieri at 456-6010 (ext. 3031).

### ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES (AIS)

The district shall provide academic intervention services (AIS) to students who have been identified as being at risk of falling below the state learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and/or science. Such services may include additional instruction services and/or student support services such as guidance, counseling, and study skills.

A student's eligibility for AIS will be determined based on his or her performance on state assessment examinations and/or in accordance with district assessment procedures. Students who participate in intervention programs will be eligible for these services until they are at least performing at grade level.

If a student is eligible for AIS,

he/she will be assigned to an appropriately certified teacher qualified to provide instruction in the area for which academic intervention is required.

Student meetings with trained faculty will be scheduled during the school day, but all faculty members are available after school hours to provide a period of help, instruction and make-up work. (BOE Policy 4325)

When it has been determined that a student needs academic intervention services, the parents will be notified. The notice will outline the reason the student needs such services, the type of services to be provided and the consequences of not achieving the performance standards. In addition, the district will provide the parents with opportunities to consult with teachers and other professional staff, regular reports on the student's progress and information on ways to monitor and work with teachers to improve the student's performance.

## **HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION**

A student who is temporarily unable to attend school due to medical, emotional or disciplinary problems may be eligible to be instructed at home or in the hospital by an appropriately certified teacher. (BOE Policy 4327)

The parent must notify the House Principal or school counselor if a student will be on an extended school absence. An ap-

plication for home instruction can be obtained in the house offices. The application must be submitted through the Pupil Personnel Services Department, with the final approval made by the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. If the inability to attend is due to a medical or emotional reason, the parent should obtain from the child's physician a written medical request for homebound instruction.

Where advanced notice is not possible, the parent should make every effort to obtain homework assignments until such a time as home/hospital instruction may begin.

As soon as possible after receiving notice of a prolonged absence, the district will arrange for home instruction for the time periods prescribed by law. A parent or another adult is expected to be present during all teaching sessions. Tutoring may be delivered at home or an alternative site, depending upon the availability of an adult.

## **SUMMER SCHOOL**

The Middle School summer school program is designed to help students who have failed two or more core academic classes during the school year. There is a strict attendance policy for all students who attend summer school. Students may not take week long vacations during this block of time. For further information please contact your student's school counselor.

## GRADING AND PROMOTION

In the 2014-15 school year, the FMS Board of Education grading policy and procedures changed. Students are now graded using a numerical grading system based on 0 to 100 point scale with 65% considered passing. Report card grades are based on tests, homework, classroom participation, projects and assignments. Guilderland Central School District uses a paperless report card system for all students, grades K-12. Report cards are no longer sent or mailed home; instead, parents can access and review their child's academic progress and report card online via the district's SchoolTool Parent and Student Portal. We encourage parents to access, update and review our parent portal on a regular basis. To learn more about SchoolTool, visit: <http://www.guilerlandschools.org/district/schooltool/schooltoolhome.cfm>.

### GRADING SYSTEM

The Guilderland Central School District places strong value on its students and their development as learners. The challenge of creating quality student assessment and reporting systems is to balance reporting needs with instructional purposes. No one method of student assessment and grade reporting serves all purposes well. Under this premise, it is the intent of this policy to have a multi-faceted, comprehensive reporting system. Our approach to student assessment and grade reporting is designed to:

- Communicate the achievements of students to parents and others;
- Give information that students can use for self-evaluation;
- Provide incentives for students to learn;
- Identify students for different educational options;

- Evaluate program effectiveness.

The Board of Education realizes that classroom teachers have the primary responsibility to evaluate students and determine student grades and/or progress. Student assessment and grade reporting are intended to be positive tools that indicate to parents, the student, and teaching staff the level of performance and development in each class or subject area in which a student is enrolled. At all levels within our school system, teachers are expected to identify grade level or course expectations, the evidence that they will use to verify that learning has occurred, and what criteria they will use to judge that evidence. This approach should be communicated to students and parents.

The Board of Education recognizes that students are individuals with their own abilities and capabilities. The district will

utilize a local grading or progress monitoring system appropriate to elementary, middle, and high school levels. Information will be reported in a variety of ways. In addition to formal report card grades or progress reports, feedback about student performance will include parent conferences, telephone and/or e-mail contacts, standardized test score results, etc. Student assessment and grade reporting should relate to learning criteria based on the following guidelines:

- **Product Criteria:** Focus on what students know and are able to do at that time, typically through examination scores, quiz results, overall assessments, or other culminating demonstrations of learning.
- **Process Criteria:** Student assessment and grade reporting should reflect not just the final results but also how students got there. This takes into consideration overall effort, homework completion, and class participation.
- **Progress Criteria:** Considers how much students have gained from their learning experiences. (BOE Policy 4710)

## **GRADING POLICY**

FMS has a numerical grading system based on 0 to 100 point scale with 65% considered passing. Report card grades are based

on tests, homework, classroom participation, projects and assignments. Although there is much similarity in the way teachers assess student performance, there are some differences based on value assigned to each of the various grading components.

A comment section relating to student participation in class, attitude toward work and thoroughness in preparation of homework assignments will appear in a separately marked column for the marking period as part of each report card. Additional feedback in the form of specific comments from teachers to their students and parents is strongly encouraged, particularly in cases where students are not performing up to their potential. Completion of this section by the teacher is strongly recommended but not mandatory for each student.

There will be a minimum of ten grades per quarter. Supervised tests and quizzes in class, and in some cases, work to be completed outside of class such as a writing assignment (in English/language arts), an oral report, or a student project may be used. The various tests, quizzes and projects used in determining the student's grades will be proportionally averaged so that the final mark is indicative of the student's achievement in relationship to the objectives of the course. Each teacher will have a written grading policy to be shared with parents and students.

## **MAKE-UP PROCEDURES AND INCOMPLETE GRADES**

- Students who are absent must make special arrangements to complete any work missed.
- Every effort should be made for students to take a make-up test within one week of the time the student returns to school.
- Students must complete work in a manner such that incomplete grades can be converted to grades within two weeks after the end of the marking period date. Teachers must enter a grade within this two week window.
- In the event that a student misses a final exam but will return to school prior to the half day sessions in June, the teacher should arrange for the student to take the exams.
- If the student misses a final exam but will not be returning to school, then the teacher must notify the Guidance Office and submit a copy of the final exam, answer key, and any supporting materials. The House Office will arrange make-up times for those students who miss exams after the half-day sessions. (BOE Policy 4710-R)

## **HOMework**

Homework is recognized and encouraged as an extremely valuable activity and as an appropriate extension of classroom instruction. Homework provides excellent opportunities for developing good study habits, providing for individual differences and abilities, and encouraging self-initiative on the part of the student. (BOE Policy 4730)

Parents and the school share the responsibility for student learning. Student responsibilities for completing homework include:

- Listing all assignments in assignment notebook;
- Asking questions or requesting help if needed;
- Gathering all needed materials for assignments;
- Doing all assignments on time to the best of their ability;
- Reviewing daily the week's assignment schedule and setting time aside to do homework and projects;
- Getting and completing assignments after an absence;
- Understanding classroom procedures and policy;
- Asking for clarification of the assignment if needed.
- Parents can assist their children with homework by:
  - Providing a study area free of distractions and with good lighting;
  - Asking questions about the content of student homework;

- Giving requested assistance, but letting the student do his or her own work;
- Avoiding undue pressure;
- Helping create a “homework habit” at the same time each night.

The Guilderland Central School District believes that parental involvement in students’ homework is essential to making homework an integral part of the educational program. Parents should encourage and monitor homework assignments.

## ANNUAL AWARDS AND STUDENT RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

### PRINCIPAL’S ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION

Principal’s Achievement Recognition will be determined twice a year and will include all students earning an 89% or higher (no rounding up). This achievement roster will be posted on the FMS website at the end of the first semester and again at the conclusion of the school year.

### BOARD OF EDUCATION AWARD

This award program recognizes students in grades 6, 7, and 8 for success in the classroom.

- Outstanding Academic Achievement Award is presented to students who have demonstrated outstanding character while also maintaining an overall average of 95% (no rounding up) for the first three marking periods of the school year.
- Notable Academic Improvement Award is presented to students whose overall report card average has improved significantly since the beginning of the school year, and demonstrated that they have tried hard, displayed a positive attitude, and shown improved work habits in their academic performance.

## **PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

This award program, for 8th grade students, is sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education in partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. It was developed to honor those students who have excelled academically. To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- Earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 93% (no rounding up), spanning all middle school years up to and including the 1st and 2nd marking periods of 8th grade;
- Earned a 3 or a 4 on the New York State ELA or Math Assessment in their 7th grade year.

## **NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY**

Scholarship, Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship are the five key components for membership into the National Junior Honor Society. Only students at the eighth grade level are considered for candidacy.

Scholarship. At the end of the first marking period of eighth grade, all current students achieving an a cumulative average of 90% or above, without rounding,

through nine quarters, (sixth and seventh grades and the first quarter of 8th grade,) will be considered academically eligible for National Junior Honor Society (NJHS).

These students will receive, by letter, notification of eligibility in December. Those students receiving notification will then need to demonstrate Service, Character, Leadership and Citizenship.

Service, Leadership and Citizenship. To be considered further for NJHS, each candidate must perform 16 hours of community service. This can and should be done over the course of all three years at FMS but must be completed no later than the second week of February of a student's 8th grade year. A community service resources list of suggested, qualifying activities is available online on our FMS homepage. All community service hours are to be recorded in Section III of the NJHS Student Information Form.

Additionally, to demonstrate leadership and citizenship, eligible students must complete the remaining sections of the NJHS Student Information Form in its entirety. The completed form must be turned in no later than the second week of February of a student's 8th grade year to the NJHS Advisors. Forms that are incomplete will not be accepted and reviewed by the faculty council.

Student Information Forms are available in House Offices and can also be downloaded on the

FMS page of the district Web site.

As a final step, the FMS faculty council will convene to review all eligible candidates who have completed and turned in all required paperwork for leadership, service, character, and citizenship. The faculty council will select those students to be inducted into the NJHS. Selection to NJHS is a privilege bestowed upon students by the faculty of FMS. Membership is granted only to those students who have met the standards for selection which are communicated above. All potential candidates should be aware that one cannot apply for membership in NJHS and that submission of a Student Information Packet and subsequent review by the faculty council does not guarantee selection.

Candidates selected for NJHS will be notified by letter and inducted during an evening ceremony in the spring semester. The expectation is that newly inducted NJHS students continue to serve and positively contribute to FMS for the conclusion of their eighth grade year. Students who are not selected for induction will be notified by letter as well. Those who wish to appeal the decision of the faculty council should do so in writing by the date indicated on the letter notifying them of the council's decision.

For additional information or to answer any NJHS questions, students and families are encouraged to access our FMS website NJHS

resources or contact our NJHS advisors, Melissa Abbasi and Dan Rausch at [abbasim@guilderlandschools.net](mailto:abbasim@guilderlandschools.net) or [rauschd@guilderlandschools.net](mailto:rauschd@guilderlandschools.net).

## PROMOTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

The Guilderland Central School District will make every effort to place each student in the most appropriate learning level for a successful educational experience. The following guidelines govern promotion and retention:

### Student Progression

Students who pass all subjects will be promoted. Students who do not make satisfactory progress in two or more basic subjects—reading, English language arts, mathematics, spelling, social studies and science—shall have their cases considered on an individual basis and may be retained.

A decision to retain shall be arrived at by consensus from a case conference approach involving the teacher, Building Principal, school psychologist, and parent/guardian. Factors to be considered include teacher recommendation; classroom achievement and attitude; standardized test scores; social, emotional and physical development; family conference; and, for identified students, recommendations by the committee on special education (CSE). No student



will be retained without an appropriate educational plan defining what will occur that is instructionally different for the student. Once the educational plan has been implemented, the student will be monitored regularly. The educational plan will be revised until the student demonstrates acceptable performance.

### Early Identification/Intervention

Classroom teachers are expected to make every effort to identify early those students at risk of failing. The House Principal and the parents/guardian must be notified promptly if retention is anticipated, and a special support program shall be designed for each child identified as in danger of failing.

## STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

*For more information on the GCS D Code of Conduct, please refer to the Board of Education policy 5040. A copy of this policy may be found on the district website, [www.guilderlandschools.org](http://www.guilderlandschools.org), under the BOE pages.*

### STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Guilderland Central School District is committed to safeguarding the rights given to all students under state and federal law. In addition, to promote a safe, respectful, healthy, and orderly school environment, all district students have the right to:

- Take part in all district activities on an equal basis regardless of race, color, creed, weight, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other categories of individual protected against

discrimination by the law;

- Tell their side of the story regarding relevant events to school personnel authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty in connection with the imposition of the penalty;
- Access school rules and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from school personnel.

All district students have the responsibility to:

- Contribute to maintaining a safe and orderly school environment that is

conducive to learning and to show respect to other persons and to property;

- Be familiar with and abide by all district policies, rules and regulations dealing with student conduct;
- Attend school every day unless they are legally excused, and be in class, on time, and prepared to learn;
- Work to the best of their ability in all academic and extra-curricular pursuits and strive toward their highest level of achievement possible;
- React to direction given by teachers, administrators and other school personnel in a respectful, positive manner;
- Work to develop strategies to resolve problems, conflicts, and control anger;
- Ask questions when they do not understand;
- Seek help in solving problems that might lead to discipline;
- Dress appropriately for school and school functions;
- Accept responsibility for their actions;
- Conduct themselves as representatives of the district when participating in or attending school sponsored extra-curricular events and to hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct, demeanor and sportsmanship.

Teachers, students and administrators work together to make our school a place where we like to spend our time. Everyone assumes responsibility to assure that a pleasant and positive learning environment is maintained. SUCCESS is the key word and everyone can be successful if you meet your responsibilities as a middle school student. A successful Farnsworth Middle School student is expected to abide by the following standards:

- Do your best work;
- Attend school everyday;
- Arrive to classes on time;
- Complete assignments on time;
- Show courteous behavior to others and always use good manners;
- Respect everyone's rights and feelings, school property and the property of others;
- Follow the rules posted in the bus while traveling to and from school and when on field trips;
- Use a conversational tone of voice;
- Minimize locker and other noises to provide fellow students with good learning conditions;
- Obtain a pass for permission to move from one area of the building to another when classes are in session;
- Use acceptable language (verbal abuse, teasing, profanity, and name calling are NOT acceptable behaviors);

- Always walk in the building;
- Leave your outside coat, hat, and book bag in your locker;
- Leave your electronic devices at home (If you do bring them to school, they should be turned off and secured).

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT DRESS

Education at Farnsworth Middle School is a responsibility that we take seriously. One of our goals is to minimize distractions and disruptions throughout the instructional day. Students and their parents have the primary responsibility for acceptable student dress and appearance. The guidelines described below are designed to reduce distractions that impact our educational program.

- A student's grooming, dress, and appearance shall be safe and appropriate as to not disrupt, distract, nor interfere with the educational process.
- A student's grooming, dress, and appearance shall include appropriate footwear at all times. Footwear that represents a safety hazard is not allowed.
- Hats, bandanas, do-rags, and other head coverings cannot be worn during the prescribed school hours (except for medical and/or religious purposes). They should be left in lockers during the day.
- Clothing must be free

of items that are vulgar, obscene, and libelous or denigrate others on account of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

- A student's grooming, dress, and appearance may not promote and/or endorse the use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and/or encourage other illegal, sexual, or violent behavior.
- Recognize that extremely brief garments, revealed midribs and see-through garments are not appropriate and are distracting to the educational setting and mission of the District and its students.
- Ensure that underwear is completely covered with outer clothing.

Students may be asked to change their clothing at the discretion of an administrator in the building.

## STUDENT CONDUCT IN THE CAFETERIUM

Lunch should be an enjoyable time for all. Cooperative behavior is required in the cafeteria to help create a pleasant atmosphere. A varied lunch menu is provided each day. Students may select the main meal, choose from the

a la carte menu or bring a lunch from home. Students have thirty minutes in which to eat lunch and engage in quiet conversations with friends. Students may pay for their lunch each day or set-up an online payment account (see page 46). Book bags are NOT allowed in the cafeteria and there are no reserved places in line.

To make lunch time more enjoyable for everyone at Farnsworth Middle School, the cafeteria staff asks that all students:

- Be polite and respectful of all staff and students;
- Wait your turn, there are no reserved places in line;
- Walk at all times;
- Sit in assigned areas and remain seated (Make sure that there are six or fewer students on each side of the table);
- Talk in a quiet, conversational voice—no shouting;
- No pushing, running or throwing food, paper or other objects;
- Consume all food and beverages in the cafeteria (Opened food items cannot be taken out of the cafeteria);
- Be neat and pick up after yourself to help keep the area clean (Keep uneaten food on trays and empty trays carefully);
- Remain seated until dismissed by a staff member (Dismissal will be by areas.

A pass is needed to leave the cafeteria at times other than dismissal);

- Recycle.

Students who misbehave during lunch time will be reminded of the rules after their first offense. Students who continue to misbehave will have their parents contacted and may be disciplined under the district's Code of Conduct.

## USE OF PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

At Farnsworth Middle School, the use of personal devices are guided by the following criteria:

- Ensuring safety;
- Minimizing disruption;
- Developing digital citizenship.

Personal electronic devices can only be used with permission and under the supervision of teachers and staff. Unsafe or disruptive use of personal devices is prohibited.

When personal electronic devices are not being used for appropriate purposes, they should be turned off and out of sight.

Misuse of any personal electronic device or its features is a violation of the code of conduct and may result in disciplinary action. In addition, these personal electronic devices may be confiscated and a parent required to pick it up.

## USE OF BICYCLES, SKATEBOARDS,

## **ROLLER BLADES, AND SNEAKER SKATES ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Students may ride their bicycles to school; however, they must walk their bicycles on school sidewalks. As soon as students arrive at school, they should park and lock their bicycles in the appropriate area. The school is not responsible for stolen or damaged bicycles.

Skateboards, roller skates, sneaker skates and roller blades are not allowed on school property. If a student brings these items to school, they will be confiscated. Students should see their House Principal to make arrangements for the return of the confiscated item.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

Discipline is most effective when it deals directly with the problem at the time and place it occurs, and in a way that is viewed as fair and impartial by the student. Therefore, before seeking outside help, the staff member will first try to create a change in the behavior. When the staff member has made an effort to bring about positive change in the behavior, and it hasn't been successful, the staff member will bring the matter to the attention of an administrator. The staff member and the administrator will develop a strategy for addressing the problem.

Disciplinary action, when necessary, will be firm, fair and consistent

so as to be the most effective in changing student behavior. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel authorized to impose disciplinary penalties will consider the following:

- The student's age;
- The nature of the offense and the circumstances which led to the offense;
- The student's prior disciplinary record;
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline;
- Information from parents, teachers and/or others, as appropriate;
- Other extenuating circumstances.

As a general rule, discipline will be progressive. This means that a student's first violation will usually merit a lighter penalty than subsequent violations.

If the conduct of a student is related to a disability or suspect disability, the student shall be referred to the Committee on Special Education and discipline, if warranted, shall be administered consistent with the separate requirements of the Code of Conduct for disciplining students with a disability or presumed disability.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

It is our expectation that students will respect others, act responsibly and make good decisions regarding their interactions with fellow students, faculty, staff and

their use of the school building.

It is prohibited to engage in conduct that is disorderly. Below are some examples:

- Running in hallways;
- Making unreasonable noises;
- Using language or gestures that are profane, lewd, vulgar and abusive;
- Obstructing vehicle or pedestrian traffic;
- Engaging in any willful act that disrupts the normal operation of the school community;
- Trespassing (Students are not permitted in any school building, other than the one they regularly attend, during regular school hours without permission from an administrator, teacher, coach or advisor ahead of time);
- Computer/electronic communications misuse.

It is prohibited to engage in conduct that is insubordinate:

- Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators, or other school employees in charge of the student, or demonstrating disrespect;
- Lateness for, missing or leaving school without permission;
- Skipping detention.

It is prohibited to engage in conduct that is disruptive:

- Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of

teachers, school administrators, or other school personnel in charge of students;

- Being late for school or classes frequently;
- Being frequently unprepared for class.

## Harassment

It is the policy of the Guilderland Central School District not to permit discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, creed, weight, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, economic status, marital status, sexual orientation or disability in the district's educational programs, activities or employment.

Harassment may take the form of comments, name-calling, jokes, stalking, perpetuating rumors or gossip, offensive gestures or language, assault or any other behavior that is designed to annoy, intimidate or cause fear.

## Hazing and Bullying

Bullying and/or hazing of students and staff are prohibited behaviors and will not be tolerated at Farnsworth Middle School.

Hazing means committing an act against a student, or coercing a student into committing an act, that creates a risk of emotional, physical or psychological harm to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student organization, club or for any other purpose. (BOE Policy 5030)

The goal of the Guilderland

Central School District is to prevent bullying. The Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a learning atmosphere which is respectful and supportive. Providing a safe school environment where all students and employees are treated with respect and dignity, and are free from bullying, intimidation and harassment is one of the district's highest priorities. This freedom is fundamental to our K-12 education program and is extended to everyone without exception. (BOE Policy 5040)

Bullying is defined as a hostile activity which harms or induces fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror. Bullying may be premeditated or a sudden activity. It may be subtle or easy to identify, done by one person or a group. Bullying includes but is not necessarily limited to:

- Power imbalance - occurs when a bully uses his/her physical or social power over a victim.
- Intent to harm - the bully seeks to inflict physical or emotional harm and/or takes pleasure in this activity.
- Threat of further aggression - the bully and the victim believe the bullying will continue.
- Terror - when any bullying increases, it becomes a "systematic violence or harassment used to intimidate and maintain dominance."

(Barbara Coloroso, The Bully,

The Bullied & The Bystander, 2003)

There are at least three kinds of bullying: physical, verbal and social/relational.

- Physical - poking, slapping, hitting, tripping or causing a fall, choking, kicking, punching, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, twisting arms or legs, damaging clothes and personal property, threatening gestures, setting fires, assault with a weapon.
- Verbal - name calling, insulting remarks, verbal teasing, frightening phone calls, violent threats, extortion, taunting, gossip, spreading rumors, racist slurs, threatening electronic communications, and anonymous notes.
- Social or Relational - excluding someone from a group, isolating, shunning, spreading rumors or gossiping, arranging public humiliation, undermining relationships, teasing about clothing, looks, giving dirty looks, aggressive stares.

Bullying is a violation of our district's core values and will not be tolerated. The Board of Education condemns all forms of bullying. No one—students or employees—should be fearful of being bullied or harassed. The actions of any one person or group of individuals which threaten the health

and safety of students and/or staff must be addressed promptly. Early intervention, reinforcement of a consistent message and follow through from students, parents, staff and administration can ensure that everyone's right to learn and work in a safe environment is respected.

While the focus of this policy is on prevention, bullying acts may still occur. In these cases, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and the behavior must improve. Offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

Students who have been bullied, parents whose children have been bullied or other students who observe bullying behavior are encouraged to make a verbal and/or written complaint to a teacher, coach, bus driver, social worker, school counselor, supervisor, or administrator. Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step to prevent escalation and to resolve issues in the earliest stages. At all times, complaints will be documented, tracked and handled according to the regulations and procedures outline in Board policy and the district's Code of Conduct.

### FMS Anti-bullying Rules

#### LOOK THROUGH MY EYES

- We will not bully others.
- We will try to help students who are bullied.

- We will make it a point to include students who are easily left out.
- When we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Any perceived incidents of misconduct in this area should be reported to any staff member. It is the right of every FMS student to be treated with respect.

### Fighting/Violence

Fighting will not be tolerated. Students are expected to AVOID physical confrontations at all times. This includes pushing, shoving, tripping, hitting or any other action that could result in an injury to another person. Students are responsible for not contributing to or encouraging physical confrontations or negative behaviors. Students are responsible for preventing conflicts and informing adults of concerns or problems. Everyone has a choice when faced with physical confrontation. Walking away is the first choice and getting help from an adult to resolve a conflict is a second choice.

If a fight occurs there will be serious consequences which may include:

- Immediate suspension from school (in-school/out-of-school);
  - Parent involvement;
  - Removal of students from school activities for a period of time, including field trips, dances, team events as determined by an administrator;



- Community/Volunteer services;
- Counseling, if necessary;
- Involvement of the School Resource Officer, if necessary.

### Theft

Theft occurs each year and students complain of books and valuables that are lost or stolen. In the majority of cases, carelessness is the reason. The school is NOT responsible for items that are lost or stolen.

With that in mind, all students:

- Should keep all valuables in a locked locker;
- Should not bring large amounts of cash or items of special value to school;
- Should not share locker combinations with anyone.

### Vandalism and Property Damage

Students who destroy or vandalize school property are required to pay for losses or damages. If a student willfully destroys school property, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken and students may be subject to arrest.

### Weapons

Board of Education policy prohibits anyone, except an officer of the law, from bringing a weapon on to school grounds. Immediate out-of-school suspension pending a Superintendent's Hearing will result. Any replicas of a weapon, toys that simulate weapons or parts of

a weapon are not allowed. Verbal and written threats regarding the use of weapons may constitute violation of the policy and be subject to disciplinary action. (BOE Policy 5312.2)

### Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

Board of Education policy strictly prohibits possessing, consuming, distributing, or exchanging alcoholic beverages or illegal substances—or being under the influence of either. Additionally, the smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or pipes or chewing smokeless tobacco is also strictly prohibited. Engaging in these types of behaviors carry serious consequences. These may include long-term suspension, Superintendent's Hearing, and the involvement of law enforcement.

### Academic Misconduct

Board of Education policy prohibits engaging in any form of academic misconduct. This includes plagiarism, cheating, copying, altering records or assisting another student in any of these actions. Students who are found to have participated in any of these types of behaviors will be subject to disciplinary consequences.

### Selling, Purchasing or Trading Items

Selling, purchasing or trading any items at school, unless it is school sponsored, is strictly prohibited. This includes candy and

gum, etc. Items found being offered for sale or trade will be taken and returned when a parent/guardian comes to pick up their child.

### Off Campus Misconduct

Board of Education Policy prohibits engaging in off-campus misconduct that interferes with, or can reasonably be expected to disrupt the educational process in the school or at a school function. This includes the following:

- Cyberbullying (i.e., inflicting willful and repeated harm through the use of electronic text;
- Threatening or harassing students or school personnel over the phone or other electronic device.

## DUE PROCESS/ DISCIPLINARY PENALTIES

The amount of due process a student is entitled to receive before a penalty is imposed depends on the penalty being imposed. In all cases, regardless of the penalty imposed, the school personnel authorized to impose the penalty must inform the student of the alleged misconduct and must investigate, to the extent necessary, the facts surrounding the alleged misconduct. All students will have an opportunity to present their version of the facts to the school

personnel imposing the disciplinary penalty in connection with the imposition of the penalty.

Students who are to be given penalties other than an oral warning, written warning or written notification to their parents are entitled to additional rights before the penalty is imposed.

Consequences may include the following:

- Detention;
- Bus suspension;
- Suspension from Athletic Participation, Extra-curricular Activities, and Other Privileges;
- In-School Suspension;
- Teacher Disciplinary removal of Disruptive Students;
- Short-term (5 days or less) suspension from school (Building Principal);
- Long term (more than 5 days) suspension from school (Superintendent Hearing);
- Permanent suspension from school (Superintendent and BOE).

### Suspension of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities shall be entitled to all procedural safeguards as non-disabled students. Additionally, the Committee on Special Education shall:

- Conduct a behavioral assessment and develop or review behavioral intervention plans

when the number of days suspended reaches ten;

- Conduct a manifestation determination.

## STUDENT SEARCHES

School lockers, desks, and other such equipment are not the private property of students but the property of the school district, and as such may be opened and subject to inspection from time to time by school officials. (BOE Policy 5330)

Under special circumstances, school officials may search students, particularly if there is reasonable suspicion that a student possesses illegal matter, for example, a dangerous weapon or illegal drugs. Students must be aware that such items are forbidden both on school property and at school-related activities.

## STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Students will be given an opportunity to be heard regarding complaints and grievances they may have. On issues affecting the student body, students should discuss the matter with their student government representatives before appealing to the school administration.

A student filing a complaint for any matter, or alleging discrimination on the basis of disability and/or sex including sexual harass-

ment or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation, should read the following information regarding the resolution of the complaint. The following procedures may also apply to student grievances over other matters, such as racial harassment.

### Investigation of a Complaint

Upon receipt of a formal or informal complaint, a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of the allegations will follow. All witnesses shall be interviewed and complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

### Informal Complaints

The Guilderland Central School District encourages the resolution of all student complaints as promptly as possible and at the lowest level possible. Accordingly, students are urged to discuss complaints first with the appropriate teacher, staff member or House Principal. However, if the complaint concerns sexual harassment, the student and/or parent should notify the Compliance Officer, Regan Johnson, at the District Office. In no event will the student be required to discuss the alleged harassment with the individual alleged to be harassing him or her.

Upon receipt of an informal complaint, the Compliance Officer, designee, House Principal or other appropriate staff member will conduct a prompt investigation to determine what occurred and then take appropriate steps to resolve

the situation.

Complainants have the right to end the informal process at any time and begin the formal stage of the complaint process.

### Formal Complaints

Formal complaints may be submitted either to initially report a complaint or as a follow-up to an unsatisfactory resolution of an informal attempt to resolve a complaint.

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The Guilderland Central School District offers a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for students. Participation in such activities provides students with experience in building social relationships, developing

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students are encouraged to participate in many co-curricular activities offered at FMS. Participation enriches the middle school experience, and makes the time here more meaningful and enjoyable. An Activities Brochure is available to students and parents at <http://www.guilderland-schools.org/farnsworth/clubs/clubs.cfm>. If you have an idea for an activity, talk to a teacher or administrator about possibly adding something new to the list. This is your school, so join in! Listen to the TV news for important daily announcements about clubs, sports, and activities.

interests in an academic area, and gaining an understanding of the responsibilities of good citizenship.

Members of school-sponsored clubs and teams are representatives of the school district. Farnsworth Middle School students who participate in extracurricular activities are expected to conform to standards that meet or exceed those in the school district Code of Conduct. (BOE Policy 5210)

## STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Board of Education encourages secondary level students to pursue clubs and interests which may not be related directly to any of the curriculum programs offered in the district. In pursuit

of such goals and in compliance with the federal Equal Access Act, the Board maintains a limited open forum by which middle school students may meet for voluntary student-initiated activities unrelated directly to the curriculum, regardless of the religious, political, philosophical or other content of speech of such activities. Contact the House Principal for details. (BOE policy 5210)

The district reserves the right to require a group to submit:

- A list of its members designated as contacts;
- A copy of its constitution and/or bylaws; and
- The constitution and/or bylaws of any off campus organization with which it is affiliated.

Generally, student groups may not restrict membership on the basis of race, sex, national origin or other arbitrary criteria.

## **DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE ON SCHOOL GROUNDS**

Students may distribute literature on school grounds and in school buildings. However, school authorities may regulate the time, manner, place and duration for such distribution. In addition, school authorities may regulate the content of literature to be distributed on school grounds to the extent necessary to avoid material and substantial interference with normal school procedures.

(BOE Policy 4510.2 - R.2)

No literature may be distributed on school grounds unless a copy is approved in advance by the superintendent of schools.

## **STUDENT WEB PAGES**

School-sponsored web pages and web pages created as part of the educational program may be regulated for content similar to the standards that apply to other student publications. Student web pages created for non-school purposes may be regulated by school authorities as to the time, manner, place and duration for distribution.

## **STUDENT FUNDRAISING**

It is recognized that fundraising is the major source of money for student organizations. Each group must receive the permission of the Building Principal or the Building Principal's designee to engage in any fund-raising activity at least two weeks before any items are ordered or any commitments are made to either outside companies

or to students. (BOE Policy 5252)

## **STUDENT FIELD TRIPS**

Farnsworth Middle School believes field trips are an important part of the educational program. By providing students with hands-on experience and exposure to the larger community, field trips can

greatly enhance a student's educational experiences. (BOE Policy 4531)

A signed permission slip from the parent or guardian is required for each child for each field trip. A child who does not provide a signed permission slip will be prohibited from participating and will be given an alternative assignment on the day of the field trip.

The classroom teacher will provide parents with specific instructions for lunch, appropriate dress, and arrival and departure times. If the weather is bad on the day of a scheduled field trip, parents should contact the Main Office to inquire on the status of the trip.

All students are expected to exhibit proper behavior on field trips. While field trips take place outside of school, school rules still apply. Students are expected to abide by the district's Code of Conduct while on a field trip. In addition, students who are unable to maintain appropriate behavior in the classroom may jeopardize their opportunity to go on a field trip. Parents will be notified prior to the trip if there are concerns about their child's behavior.

## Cancellations

The overall safety of the proposed trip location and of travel conditions will be a key factor in granting approval for field trips. Should conditions change during the time between the approval of a trip and the actual date of depar-

ture, it may become necessary to cancel the trip and deposited monies may be forfeited.

## Chaperones

Parents are invited and encouraged to chaperone selected school field trips. Any parent interested in chaperoning a field trip should contact their child's teacher.

## SPECTATOR SPORTSMANSHIP AT INTERSCHOLASTIC EVENTS

The Guilderland Central School District expects the same behavior of all spectators at school-sponsored sports events that it expects of its staff and students during the regular school day. Spectators at sports events who do not abide by the following guidelines will, in the first instance, be reminded of their obligation, and in the second instance, be asked to leave the event and/or refrain from attending future events for a specific period of time.

All spectators at Guilderland Central School District's interscholastic events will be expected to abide by the following:

- Encourage good sportsmanship for all players, coaches, and officials at every game, practice or other sports event;
- Place the emotional and physical well-being of the students participating first;

- Support the coaches and officials working with the children and encourage a positive and enjoyable experience for all;
- Demand a sports environment for the children that is free from drugs, tobacco and alcohol pursuant to the district's Code of Conduct;
- Encourage sportsmanlike behavior from all participants and other spectators.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

### ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

These rules are to ensure the safety of students and employees of the district while on district property.

All students and members of the school community must:

- Immediately report any conditions involving equipment or buildings which may be dangerous to student or employee health or welfare;
- Immediately report any unsafe practices by anyone in the building or on the grounds;
- Observe the 15 mile per hour speed limit on school grounds.

#### Eye Safety Devices

Eye safety devices are provided for all students, instructors and visitors who are engaged in or observing the use of materials or equipment which may potentially damage eyesight.

### STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The Farnsworth Middle School nurse monitors the health of all students in the school and is the liaison between the school and various health agencies. All

students are required to have an updated emergency card on file in the Health Office. This card should be filled out completely and signed by the parent or guardian. The Health Office should be advised of any changes in address, phone numbers, and emergency contact person(s).

The school nurse will provide emergency care for students involved in accidents or unexpected medical situations. If a student becomes ill during the school day, he or she should inform a teacher and report to the nurse. If the nurse finds it necessary to send the student home, a parent/guardian will be notified and arrangements will be made to pick up the student in the nurse's office.

#### Administration of Prescription Medicine in School

If a student needs to take medication during the school day, he or she must follow these rules:

- Bring a note from his or her parent which gives the nurse permission to store the medication for the student's use, releasing the Board and its employees of liability for the administration of medication;
- Give the nurse a doctor's note with instructions about dosage, times given, etc.;
- Bring a copy of the prescription;



- An adult must bring the medication to school in the original container.

### **Administration of Over-the-Counter Medication in School**

Over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol, ibuprofen or Advil **MUST** be in an original container accompanied by a note with specific instructions, signed by a parent or guardian and a health care professional. Medications wrapped in plastic bags, envelopes, tinfoil, etc. will not be administered.

Students are not permitted to carry or administer prescription medication.

### **Student Physicals**

All 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are required by law to have a physical exam given by the school doctor or family physician. Sixth graders should have received a physical form with their June report card (otherwise physical forms may be obtained online or from the school nurse for the family physician to fill out). If a form is not returned to the school nurse by Oct. 1 of the school year, the school physician will complete a student's physical in November or December. Students wishing to participate in an interscholastic athletic program may also need to have a physical examination. Please see the Athletic Department for further information.

### **Health Screening**

In accordance with the law, the school will provide height,

weight, and scoliosis (spine check) screening for all students in grades 6, 7, and 8. In addition, students in grade 7 will also receive vision and hearing screening. Parents will be called if a student shows significant changes or has difficulty with the screening.

### **Immunizations**

New York State requires all children to be immunized against polio, rubella, diphtheria, mumps, measles, hepatitis B, and varicella (chicken pox) or have medical documentation should the child have already had the disease. Parental recall is not acceptable. Students who are entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade and who are 11 years of age or older must receive an immunization containing tetanus toxoid, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap). Proof of immunization for new students must be presented for admission.

Parents will be notified of the required immunizations needed for entry, certificates of proof, and available resources for obtaining appropriate certificates. For more information on health issues, contact the school nurse at 456-6010 Ext. 3015.

### **FIRST AID**

In emergencies, the school nurse will follow established first aid procedures. These procedures include the following requirements:

- No medical treatment except first aid is permitted in school;
- A master first aid kit shall be kept and properly maintained

in the school and on each school bus;

- No drugs shall be administered by school personnel unless authorized by a physician;
- Parents are asked to sign and submit an emergency medical authorization which shall indicate the procedure they wish the school to follow in the event of a medical emergency involving their child;
- In all cases where the nature of an illness or an injury appears serious, the parent will be contacted if possible, and the instructions on the child's emergency card followed. In extreme emergencies, arrangements may be made for the child's immediate hospitalization whether or not the parent can be reached.

## **AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AED)**

The Guilderland Central School District maintains on site, in each instructional school facility, at least one functional automated external defibrillator (AED) for use during emergencies. Whenever public school facilities are used for school-sponsored or school-approved curricular or extracurricular events or activities or a school-sponsored athletic contest is held at any location,

school administrators shall ensure the presence of at least one staff person who is trained in the operation and use of an AED. Where a school-sponsored competitive athletic event is held at a site other than a public school facility, the public school officials must assure that AED equipment is provided on-site.

## **DISTRICT AND SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS**

The Guilderland School District has adopted a district-wide school safety plan as well as building-level emergency response plans for each building in the district. These plans are intended to define how the district and each school building will respond to acts of violence and other disasters.

They provide a framework for identifying and implementing appropriate strategies for creating and maintaining a safe, secure learning environment for all students.

A copy of the district-wide school safety plan is available for examination in the district offices.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

The Building Principal is responsible for conducting fire drills in order to instruct students and staff in exiting the school building in an emergency in the shortest time possible and without confusion and panic. Fire drills shall

include instruction on fire drill exits and fire alarm boxes, as well as fire drill procedures.

All students are expected to cooperate with staff members during fire drills, and to leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner. The exit route is posted in each room. Students must stay with their teacher. Distracting behavior will be subject to either teacher or administrative discipline, and may merit a penalty.

## **SCHOOL FOOD SERVICES**

The Farnsworth Middle School offers a free, reduced and paid breakfast and lunch program.

Students can access the menu on the school district website, [www.guilderlandschools.org](http://www.guilderlandschools.org), where it will indicate the "hot lunch" of the day. Sandwiches made to order, salads, hamburgers, cheeseburgers and chicken products are also offered daily. Milk, fruit and vegetables accompany each meal. Ice cream is also available to students.

The school breakfast program provides students with a healthy morning meal. Each breakfast includes milk, fruit, juice and cereal or hot entree.

Information about school breakfast and lunch prices, as well as payment options, may be found on the district website. Families may choose to either pay for meals in cash or by check (made payable to School Lunch Fund) or parents may

set-up an online payment account at [www.parentonline.net](http://www.parentonline.net).

Eligibility for free and reduced price meals is based upon the economic need of the family. Applications are distributed each September to determine eligibility. Applications may also be completed and submitted online via the district website. Parents must file a new application for the program each September. Families who fail to file a new application annually will be discontinued from the program 30 school days into school. For information on this program, please call the school lunch director at 456-6200 Ext. 3110.

# TRANSPORTATION

## TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

The Guilderland Central School District is committed to providing a safe and economical transportation system for district students. (BOE Policy 8410) With the start of a new year, it is beneficial to review what students need to do when riding the bus:

- Arrive at the designated bus stop five minutes before pickup.
- Stand back from the road while waiting for the bus.
- Cross at least ten feet in front of the bus and **ONLY** after the driver has signaled that it is safe to cross.
- Find another way to transport objects, such as musical instruments, that are bigger than they can hold.
- Permission will not be given for any students to be dropped off at a different location this school year. Due to the limited number of students on each bus route the district cannot switch students from their assigned routes.
- Our after school activity period this school year will run Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 3:31 - 4:05.
- Questions about the school transportation program should be directed to the

Director of Transportation, at  
518-861-6434.

## STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES

In order to ensure a safe bus ride to and from school, the following rules must be observed:

- Keep all noise at a low level. No offensive language;
- Keep hands, feet and all possessions to yourself;
- Respect others, school property, and yourself (The throwing of objects in or out of the bus is prohibited);
- Obey the bus driver; Remain seated until the driver gives permission for you to leave (The driver is authorized to assign seats);
- Eating, drinking, or smoking on the bus is prohibited.

The driver's responsibility is to safely transport the students to and from school. It is the student's responsibility to conduct him/herself in an orderly and safe manner. Respect between students and driver is the key to a safe ride to school. SAFETY is our main goal. Parents should be aware of the growing volume of traffic in our district. Distractions to the driver from behavioral problems present a serious danger to all passengers.

Discipline problems will be referred in writing by the bus driver to the House Principal. The penalty for continued misbehavior may range from suspension from riding the bus to suspension from school. All school rules apply while students are riding the buses. All students riding school buses are expected to maintain good conduct while traveling. (BOE Policy 5320)

## **TRANSPORTATION FOR SCHOOL-SPONSORED EVENTS**

When Farnsworth Middle School provides transportation to students for a school-sponsored activity or event, it will also provide return transportation unless the parent or legal guardian of a participating student has given the district written notice authorizing an alternative form of return transportation for their student. If intervening circumstances make return transportation impractical, a chaperone or other representative of Farnsworth Middle School will remain with the student until the student's parent or guardian has been contacted and informed of the intervening circumstances, and the student has been delivered to his/her parent or guardian.

## **VIDEO CAMERAS ON SCHOOL BUSES**

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to maintain and improve discipline and to insure the safety and welfare of its staff and students on school transportation vehicles. After having carefully considered the rights of privacy with the district's duty to insure discipline for the health, welfare and safety of staff and students on school transportation vehicles, the Board supports the use of video cameras on its school buses.

Video cameras may be used to monitor student behavior on school vehicles transporting students to and from school or extracurricular activities. Students found violating bus conduct rules will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct. The district shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws related to personal records when the district is considering keeping the recording. And although video recordings will be used primarily for the purpose of evidence for maintaining discipline, the district may use the recordings for any other purpose it deems appropriate. (BOE Policy 8414.4)

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS

The Superintendent of Schools may delay the opening of school, close the school or dismiss students/staff early in the event of severe weather or hazardous road conditions. Every attempt will be made so elementary school students will not be left without proper parental supervision.

Parents are requested to avoid calling schools on days of poor weather; it is important to keep school phone lines open. School closing and delayed starting times will be announced over local radio stations. The following television/radio stations will carry information regarding emergency closings:

- WFLY 92.3 FM
- WYJB 95.5 FM
- WRVE 99.5 FM
- WRGB TV Channel 6
- WXXA TV Channel 8
- WTEN TV Channel 10
- WNYT TV Channel 13
- Cable News Channel 9
- Spectrum 1302 (Town of Guilderland)

School closings, delayed openings and early dismissals resulting from weather conditions or other emergencies will also be announced on the district's website, [www.guilderlandschools.org](http://www.guilderlandschools.org), and on the district's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Parents will also receive a phone call via the SchoolMessenger service when schools are

closed, opening on a delay or dismissing early due to weather or other emergency conditions. Parents do not need to register for this service.

In addition, parents can receive information regarding school closings and delays in their e-mail inbox or as a text on their mobile phone via the Guilderland School News Notifier (SNN). Visit the district website to sign-up for the service. Please note: Parents are always encouraged to rely on multiple sources of information for school closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals.

If school is delayed, any child who walks to school or is transported by parents should arrive later as well. There is no supervision of students until staff is present in the building.

If school dismisses early or is closed, all evening activities including continuing education classes are also cancelled.

Prepare in advance for early dismissal. Have a plan in place so your child knows where to go if school should close early. If no report is heard, it can be assumed the schools are opening on time.

## PARENT PACKET

### PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Parents with disabilities will be afforded an equal opportunity to participate in the services, programs and activities of the district, particularly those which are designed for parental involvement and are directly related to their child's academic and/or disciplinary progress (e.g., parent/teacher conferences, and/or meetings with other school personnel).

Requests for accommodations should be directed to the Superintendent at least 10 business days prior to the scheduled activity or program. Such requests should include a description of the parent's needs and the specific accommodation they are requesting.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The Guilderland Central School District believes that children succeed when there is a strong partnership between home and school. This partnership thrives on open communication between parents and the school, parental involvement in their child's education, and parental responsibility for all aspects of their child's education.

Parents can become partners in their child's education by using the following strategies:

- Becoming familiar with their child's school activities and academic program, including special programs offered by the district;
- Discussing with school counselors, teachers and principals the options and opportunities available to their child;
- Monitoring their child's academic progress and contacting teachers when necessary;
- Attending scheduled teacher/school conferences;
- Monitoring their child's attendance at school (Regular school attendance is important if a child is to achieve his/her full potential. Parents are urged to make an extra effort to ensure their child establishes a regular attendance pattern).

Learning does not end when the school day is over. The Guilderland Central School District encourages parents to set aside time for reading, informal learning activities, and assisting their child with homework assignments. Parents can also become involved in their child's education on a broader scale by joining the Farnsworth Middle School Parent Teacher Association. The PTA typically serves as a strong link between home and school. By joining the PTA parents become partners in advancing the educational goals of

the school district while enhancing the welfare of their child.

PTA meetings are held at the Middle School on a monthly basis. Check the school calendar for dates and times.

## **ACCESS TO SCHOOL DISTRICT RECORDS**

Often, parents, students and other community members may want to have specific information about the schools in this district. Interested persons may inspect and/or copy school district records at the Office of the Records Access Officer located at district office during regular business hours on any business day on which the Board of Education offices are open.

Requests to inspect or make copies of records must be submitted in writing, either in person or by mail, to the Records Access Officer, who will provide information regarding fees and the number of copies available. (For more information, please see BOE Policy 1120.)

## **ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives parents and students over 18 years of age (referred to in the law as “eligible students”) the following rights:

- The right to inspect and review (your child’s) (your) education records within 45 days of the day the district receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the Building Principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access and notify you of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

- The right to request the amendment of (your child’s) (your) education records that you believe are inaccurate or misleading.

Parents or eligible students may ask the district to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading by writing the Principal, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it is inaccurate or misleading.

If the district decides not to amend the record as requested, it will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided at this same time.

- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in (your child’s) (your) education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational



interests. A school official is a person employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the school board; a person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the district discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The Office that administers FERPA is the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.
- Guilderland Central School's

formal reporting system includes report cards and/or forms developed by the professional staff and issued periodically. Scheduled conferences between parents and teachers, and interim reports will be issued every five weeks. Parents are urged to visit the school and to meet with school counselors and teachers whenever necessary. Please schedule all such visits through the house secretaries in advance.

## VISITORS TO FMS

Keeping students safe is the highest priority at GCSO. Parents of FMS students are encouraged to visit periodically during the course of the school year.

All visitors must enter through the main entrance, and will be buzzed in through a first set of vestibule doors.

Visitors requesting entry into FMS through the second set of doors will be required to present a valid driver's license, government-issued ID or passport in order to enter. Our receptionist will print a badge that must be visibly worn at all times while in the building.

Parents and visitors must check out with the school receptionist upon leaving. The District's security software E-Z Lobby uses ID information – first name, last name and date of birth – to identify potential sex-offender registry matches. Once an individual's ID has been scanned and is in the system, visitors may enter without

the need to be scanned again.

Those visiting a district school for the first time should arrive early to allow for the time necessary to complete this process.

For certain events, teachers may request parents and visitors to RSVP in advance. Unless they have a specific reason and prior approval from the Building Principal, student visitors from other schools are not permitted to enter school buildings.

## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA**

From time to time, school district officials may release student information (name, grade, photograph, address, academic interest, artwork, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, terms of school attendance and graduation, awards received, and future educational plans) for use in school district publications and within district Web sites and district social media sites, or to the media for public relations purposes. Parents who object to the release of their child's information and/or photograph should notify both their child's building principal and the district's communications office in writing on or before September 15 of the upcoming school year.

## **CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

The Guilderland Central School District expects a high standard of conduct from its students, faculty and support staff, as well as visitors to the schools. The school will enforce a Code of Conduct which governs the conduct of all persons, whether or not their presence is authorized, upon any premises or property under the control of the district and used in its teaching, administrative, cultural, recreational, athletic, and other programs and activities.

No person, either alone or with others, shall engage in the following:

- Willfully injure any other person or threaten to do so;
- Willfully damage or remove district property;
- Disrupt the orderly conduct of classes, school programs or other school activities;
- Distribute or wear materials on school grounds which appear obscene, which advocate illegal action, discriminate against race, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation, appear libelous, disruptive to the school program or obstruct the rights of others;
- Intimidate, harass, or discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age or disability;

- Enter upon any portion of the school premises without authorization or remain in any building or facility after it is normally closed;
- Obstruct the free movement of any person in any place to which these rules apply;
- Violate traffic laws, parking regulations or other restrictions on vehicles;
- Possess, consume, sell, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, or be under the influence of either on school property or at any school-related function;
- Smoke or use tobacco on district property;
- Possess or use firearms and/or other weapons, including air guns, pistols, rifles, shotguns, ammunition, explosives, box cutters, knives, gas canisters, pepper spray or other noxious spray in or on school property (except in the case of law enforcement officers or except as specifically authorized by the school district);
- Loiter on or about school buildings or grounds;
- Gamble on school premises;
- Refuse to comply with any lawful order of an identifiable school district official acting in the performance of his or her duties;

- Willfully incite others to commit any of the acts herein prohibited;
- Violate any federal or state statute, local ordinance, or Board policy.

### Penalties

Anyone who violates any of the provisions of these rules is subject to appropriate penalties, up to and including reprimand, suspension, ejection, arrest, and/or prosecution.

## PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

Most often, parental complaints and concerns can be addressed simply through a telephone call or a conference with the teacher. If the matter is not settled satisfactorily, the complaint should be directed to the Building Principal and, if necessary, to the Superintendent.

Complaints regarding district programs, instructional or library materials, operations and/or staff members, should be directed to the Building Principal. If the matter is not satisfactorily settled, the complaint should be directed to the Superintendent, whenever possible. Additional information can also be found in Board Policy 1400, available in the Principal's or the Superintendent's office.

Some complaints may require different procedures. Any school office or the Superintendent's office can provide information regarding specific processes to be







