

Colrain Central School Family/Student Handbook



2023-2024

Colrain Central School
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The following pages contain critical information regarding both the Colrain Central School and the Mohawk Trail Regional School District's policies and procedures. Please familiarize yourself and your child(ren) with them. Additional detailed information on many of these topics is included in the Common Policies and Procedures section at the end of this handbook. If you have any questions about anything in the handbook, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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WHO ARE WE?

Colrain Central School is a service-learning school with a special emphasis on environmental science. Service learning is a form of project-based learning in which academic and social goals are accomplished through community service and working with real partners to solve real problems. By design, it develops citizenship and good character and provides a rich context for academic instruction and student learning.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At Colrain Central School, we take care of ourselves, each other, our school, and the world around us. Everything we do is tied to these ideals.

Our **vision statement** is: Colrain Central School is a rural, service-learning community that nurtures students as problem-solvers and caring, contributing citizens.

Our **mission statement** is: The mission of CCS is to provide students with a rigorous, creative, and safe educational environment that partners with the rural community – from farm to wilderness – in which we live. Through collaboration and problem solving, students will learn to take care of themselves, each other, their school, and the world around them.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE LEARNING:

- Learning has a real-world application.
- Learning encompasses a set of partnerships between school and other community resources
- Social/Emotional needs are embedded and anticipated (skills, trauma-sensitive teaching practices, etc)
- Routines for self-care/care of others (for both students and staff) are scheduled into the day.
- Learning should be exciting and engaging. Students are learning by exploring – hands on, active learning.
- Projects should reach all learners and include everyone; they are the curriculum, not an add-on.
- Learning should be built on strong family connections and engagement.
- Teachers bring their personal passions to their classrooms.

COLRAIN CENTRAL 2023-2024 SCHOOL STAFF

Classroom Teachers:

Preschool: Tylor Chmura
Kindergarten: Grace Ahrensdorf
1st grade: Lena Jillson
2nd grade: Paula Yolles
3rd grade: Anne Naughton
4th grade: Tabitha Shearer
5th grade: Melissa Norwood
6th grade: Gwennan Ickes
Principal: Amy Looman

Support Staff:

Administrative Assistant: Sandy White
Cafeteria Manager: Tina Crossman
Cafeteria Assistant: Alyssa Patenaude
Custodian: Mike Beausoleil
After School Program Director: Alyssa Patenaude

Paraprofessionals:

Lisa Burton
Mary Holloway
Jillian Jacques
Jamie Jefferson
Alice Lemelin
Heidi Patenaude
David Nelson
Genie Shearer
Sharon Wickland Shearer
Robin Tower

Specialists

Special Education Teacher: Valerie Lively
Title I Interventionist: Sarah Jensen
Special Education Teacher: Rachel Glick
School Adjustment Counselor: Hillary Stacy
Speech Language Pathologist: Kari Lyden
Reading Interventionist: Jennifer Martin
Occupational Therapist: Leanne Kieras
Physical Therapist: Becca Bouccala
School Nurse: Viney Vidal
Art Teacher: Rebecca Cummings
Physical Education Teacher: Jon Chapman
Music Teacher: Hannah Cherry
Librarian/ Service Learning Coordinator:
Talia Miller
Special Education Liaison: Carolyn Goodnow
Early Childhood Coordinator: Amy Socquet
ELL Teacher: Barbara Page

Central Office: (413-625-0192)

Superintendent: Sheryl Stanton
Director of Pupil Services: Leann Loomis
Director of Curriculum and Assessment: Sarah Jetzon
Math Coach: Amy Chang
Literacy Coach: Valerie Vasti

PARENT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Local Education Council (LEC)

The Colrain Local Education Council (LEC) is a committee of parents, staff, and community members who serve as an advisory board for the principal under the state's mandate for local control of schools. The council meets on a monthly basis and works with the principal to determine the needs of the school, to review the yearly budget, and to develop and implement a yearly School Improvement Plan to meet the assessed needs of the school. LEC meetings are posted and open to the public, and everyone is invited to attend. If needed, elections are held each September to fill seats vacated by parents and staff members. Community members are invited by the principal to serve on the council. Please contact the front office if you are interested in serving on this council.

Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO)

Colrain's PTO plays an important role in our school. The PTO meets on a monthly basis, has an active Facebook page, and sends out emails with important information on upcoming events. This group sponsors and/or participates in many annual social activities and events including caregiver forums, the Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Fair, and a range of student activities. In addition, the PTO raises money each year for equipment and supplies for the school, for scholarships, and for other needs. They have been working to raise funds to upgrade and improve our playground.

There are many ways to support the work of the PTO. There are monthly meetings that are open to all. There is always a need for volunteers to organize and run events. This year we are also looking for family members who would be interested in serving as classroom reps. We hope that all families and staff will take an active role in this important organization.

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

When staffing allows, we will run before/after school programs on all regular school days and early-release days. They will not run during school vacations, on snow days, or on days when school is released early due to bad weather. Drop-ins are welcome when necessary, but please send a note in the morning if possible if your child needs the after-school program. If a child's bill is not in good standing, they will not be able to attend the program(s) until it is.

Before-School Care

The program will begin one hour before the start of school: 7:30 on a regular day, 8:30 on a one-hour delayed opening, and 9:30 on a two-hour delayed opening. Students have time for some homework help, games, activities, and movement before the school day begins. The cost for this program is \$7.50/hour for one student and \$6.50/hour for all subsequent family members.

After-School Care

This program will run each day that school is in session from dismissal time until 5:30. Students will have time to play outside, receive some homework help, play games and engage in other activities. The cost for this program is \$7.50/hour for one student and \$6.50/hour for all subsequent family members.

DAILY ROUTINES

Communication

The vast majority of our regular communication with families occurs via email. Please make sure the office always has a current email address – that you are checking regularly – on file. Information can also be found on our website (<https://colrain.mohawktrailschools.org>) and our school’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/colraincentral>). A weekly newsletter from the principal will be sent out each Friday via email.

Daily Schedule

Our school day begins promptly at 8:45. Students arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 during which time they can either eat breakfast in the cafeteria, or go to “Meet and Greet” and visit with their friends.

Students are dismissed at 3:15, at which time students are released either to their buses or to family pickup. The lunch and recess blocks are between 11:30-1:30. All students are expected to be in school for the entire day, except for illness, appointment, or religious exemption.

There are early release days throughout the school year for staff development, parent/teacher conferences, and before holiday breaks. Please check the calendar online at the Colrain Central School website (<https://colrain.mohawktrailschools.org/Calendar>) for early release days and dismissal times. Please also note that dismissal times for elementary schools and the Mohawk Trail Regional School are different.

Bus Transportation (Travel Kuz: 413-489-3195 x 110)

All children riding the bus must observe the required safety rules and maintain appropriate behavior. At the beginning of the school year, every family will be sent a copy of the rules and regulations concerning bus transportation. We ask you to sign this form and return it to the school. Please help us to provide for the safety of all our students by reinforcing the behavior expected on the school bus. And please be aware that inappropriate behavior can result in a loss of bus privileges. Please see more detailed information in the common chapters of this handbook.

We would like to remind parents/guardians to please send a note to school if they wish for their child to get off the bus at a different stop or to take a different bus on any given day. Bus drivers cannot allow changes without such written permission from the school.

If you plan an event (i.e. birthday party, outing) which would require several children to ride a different bus on a given day, please call the bus company prior to that date in order to check on available space on the bus. It is possible for a bus to be filled to capacity and not have room to carry additional students.

Please refer to the Common Policies and Procedures at the end of this handbook for more information regarding the Mohawk Trail Regional School District’s policies regarding bus transportation.

REGISTRATION OF NEW STUDENTS

Parents or guardians of students new to Colrain Central School should register their child(ren) at least one day before the child is to begin school. The school must have a copy of each student's medical records, immunization records, birth certificate, as well as a copy of any Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan (when applicable) prior to the student's entry into school. Please feel free to call the office to arrange a meeting with the principal and/or classroom teacher and for a tour of the building.

CAFETERIA PROGRAM

Breakfast and lunch are served each day to any student who desires it. Students wishing to eat breakfast should report to the cafeteria immediately upon arriving at school in the morning. Milk is available on a daily basis for students bringing lunch from home.

Massachusetts state funds have been used to supplement federal USDA reimbursements since the onset of the COVID pandemic, which allowed us to provide free meals for students. The governor's budget allows this to happen again for the upcoming year. Additionally, based on the number of students in our school community that qualify for financial assistance, our school has been approved to provide universal free meals for all students, regardless of family income.

Even though the meals are available at no cost to all students, **all families are encouraged to fill out the application for Free & Reduced meals.** This form is sent home at the onset of the school year and is available throughout the school year, should family income or circumstances change. The number of qualifying families directly impacts the amount of Title I and other grants paid for with federal funding received by the Mohawk Trail Regional School District.

Workers: All students in grades 3-6 are expected to help their school by working on a rotating basis in the cafeteria at lunch. This gives them a sense of responsibility and is a physical example of one way we can take care of ourselves, each other, our school and the world around us.

SCHOOL-WIDE EXPECTATIONS

Expectations

To create the best learning environment in our school community, the following all-school expectations were developed and govern all aspects of school life:

- Take care of ourselves.
- Take care of each other.
- Take care of our school and the world around us.

Our rules and expectations are grounded in the belief that every individual has a right to a safe, respectful, and caring learning environment. It is also the right of all students to learn from their mistakes and be given the opportunity to develop skills and the space to improve behavior. It is the responsibility of the entire school community to ensure and protect these rights.

We believe that self-discipline is a quality all children need to develop. The development of self-discipline fosters a sense of independence, self-control and self-reliance. Expectations, often

stated as rules, are fundamental to learning self-control and self-regulation. Our discipline plan is a guideline for teaching children to take care of themselves, each other, our school, and the world around them.

Statement of Adult Responsibility

As adults, our job is to promote and support acceptable behavior by:

- Serving as positive role models by showing respect toward all children and each other.
- Giving positive feedback regarding appropriate and cooperative behavior.
- Working together with students to establish developmentally appropriate rules for the classroom.
- Explaining behavioral expectations and logical, reasonable and respectful consequences for unacceptable behavior.
- Teaching students the skills needed to follow rules and expectations, develop healthy friendships and be successful in the school setting
- Implementing alternative consequences/choices for unacceptable behavior
- Encouraging the use of conflict resolution and mediation
- Being available for all children in need.

Principal's Statement

As we seek to teach students how to become self-regulated, responsible citizens of our school community, I will operate with the following principles as my guide:

- The greatest growth will come from a strong, respectful home/school partnership. This is especially true when behavior problems arise.
- I will provide consequences that are not punitive, but designed to teach and help students make better choices in the future.
- I will proceed in all situations in the best interest of the child.
- I will guide students toward personal responsibility and the decision-making skills they will need to function in the world.
- I will arrange consequences for problem situations in such a way that the child will not be humiliated or demeaned.
- Consequences will be designed to fit the problems and the needs of the individual student(s) involved.
- If a child feels that they have been treated unjustly, I will arrange a private conference during which the student can express to me why they feel my actions were not fair. This may or may not change my course of action, but I am always open to calm, rational discussion on any matter.

COMMON LANGUAGE

Below is some of the common language that we use at Colrain Central School, along with a description of its use. It is our belief that the consistency of a common language will help support students in their efforts to meet the expectations.

- Quiet Signals – A raised hand with an open palm is the indicator that the group's attention should be focused. This is done without any talking. If it is not reasonable to gather attention this way (for example in an outside setting) or if the group is taking longer to settle down, a chime/bell or clapping signal may be used. When the quiet signal is given, everyone is expected to focus their attention on the speaker, who will wait for 100% attention before

making their announcement.

- “Freeze!” – Used to gather immediate attention to stop an unsafe behavior or avoid a dangerous situation.
- “Inside/6-inch/quiet voice” – All three of these terms are used to explain to students that their voices should be quiet and only be able to reach 6 inches. This does not mean students should whisper, but rather use an appropriate, quiet conversational voice.
- “Walking feet” – A positive way to remind students to walk rather than run. For example, if a student is running, staff would say, “Jane, please use your walking feet.”
- “Our school” – Used to instill a sense of ownership and community as well as to refer to ourselves, our students and our building.
- “Here at Colrain” – A positive way to remind students of the expectations we hold, specifically regarding behavior: “Here at Colrain we walk in the hallways.”
- “One voice” – A reminder for students to stop speaking and listen to one person at a time.
- “Redo/Fix it” – Used to give students a chance to correct a misbehavior or try again.
- “School listening look/All eyes on me” – When asked to demonstrate this, students will make eye contact with the speaker, keeping their hands and bodies still and attend silently to the speaker.
- “I notice...” – Used to give positive feedback for appropriate behavior. For example, “John, I notice you were respectful when you helped Jane pick up the crayons that had dropped.”
- “Personal space” – Used to recognize the need to be careful and aware of how close their body is to others.
- “I’m waiting for 100%” – May be said when waiting for all students to listen for directions. Instructions will be given when everyone is attending to the speaker.

RECESS

Each day students have access to at least a 30-minute recess period. We believe that recess is an important part of a student’s education as it provides the opportunity to practice social skills, get exercise, develop an appreciation of the outdoors, and be creative. Rules governing recess play have been formulated for the purpose of enabling all

students to enjoy their free time in a safe, supervised environment. Weather permitting, students spend their recess periods outside on the playground. During inclement weather, recess is held indoors. The basic concepts of respect and safety underlie all recess rules. Because of the different locations, indoor and outdoor rules differ slightly in degree and content.

Indoor Recess Rules

Indoor recess rules are designed to address the lack of adequate space in which all students can play active or noisy games at the same time. These rules have been designed to consider respect for others, limited space and supervision, and the need for safety. Flexibility of both staff and students is required for a successful indoor recess.

- Students may run, chase, or jump during indoor recess in the gymnasium only.
- Students must stay in their assigned rooms for the entire recess period unless they have permission from the adult on duty to leave.
- The gymnasium may be available for indoor recess use at certain times. The rules for the gym must be observed at all times, and supervision must be available to cover this area.

- Suitable indoor activities will be discussed in each classroom at the beginning of the year and reviewed throughout the year.
- Students must follow adult directions.

Outdoor Recess Rules

Outdoor recess rules have been formulated based on the need of students to be able to be both active and safe while at play. The following ideas underlie the rules for outdoor recess: safety, visibility, respect for others and property, and proper use of equipment.

- Students must be visible to staff on duty at all times and stay within the designated boundaries. This means that students may not go over the embankment, up into the woods, in front of the building, around the building, or into the building without permission.
- Only one student may be on a swing at a time. Students must swing straight and in a seated position. They must get on and off the swing safely. Only adults may push students on the swings, unless permission is given otherwise.
- Students must respect others' space and not interfere with others' play.
- Students must be safe with bodies and objects. Rocks, snowballs, sticks, and wood chips must stay on the ground.
- Kickball or wiffle ball games may be played on the baseball field, and gaga ball in the gaga ball pit, if there is an adult supervisor available.
- All students may be included in any game.
- In games where balls are thrown at students, balls should be thrown below the waist. ● Good sportsmanship and problem-solving are always required.
- Appropriate seasonal footwear and clothing are encouraged so that students may enjoy playing without clothing/shoe issues.
- Rules for the structure include:
 - Tag games should be played in the grassy areas.
 - Walking feet must be used on and around the structure and wood chip areas.
 - Students must use the slide one at a time.
 - Ladders should be used for climbing up only.
 - Only one student should be on the gliders or bouncer seats at a time.
- Students need to clean up the playground area before going in from recess.
- Students are encouraged to play away from the walls and windows of the building. ● When snow structures are built, they may be added to by others.
- Students may play in the woods with adult permission and supervision.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to be in school for the entire day, except for illness, medical appointments, or religious observances. If your child is going to be absent from school, please notify the school office by 9:00 a.m. by calling (413) 624-3451. If you do not communicate an absence, the school nurse or school secretary may call your home or place of work.

Upon returning to school, the student must bring a signed note from a parent/guardian to the office. The note should state the student's name, indicate the dates of absence, and give the reason for the absence. The Principal will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Unexcused absences from school include:

- Truancy
- Vacations taken while school is in session

Excused absences from school include:

- Religious observance
- Illness
- Death of a family member
- Child's medical appointment with doctor (with a doctor's note)
- Court appointment

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as arriving and/or entering the school building after the school day begins (8:45 a.m.). If a student is tardy, the parent/guardian must sign them in at the school office. Students who arrive at school after the midpoint of the school day (11:45 a.m.) will be marked absent for the day.

For more information regarding the Mohawk Trail Regional School District's policies absences and tardiness, please refer to the Common Policies and Procedures section at the end of this handbook.

DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Self-discipline is a quality all children need to develop. The school setting provides an excellent opportunity to teach children how to manage their own behavior. The development of self-discipline fosters a sense of independence, self-control and self-reliance. The CCS staff believes that self-discipline can be promoted by establishing developmentally appropriate expectations for behavior. Expectations, often stated as rules, are fundamental to learning self-control. Rules work best when students:

- Have a voice in determining the rules.
- Know the rules.
- Agree with the rules.
- Know the consequences if the rules are broken.
- Are given the opportunity to correct behavior and fix problems.

Our discipline plan is a guideline for teaching children to take care of themselves as well as each other. In addition, the District has put into place an Anti-Bullying Campaign to foster a positive and supportive school climate. Certain topics and policies related to student conduct, discipline, and legal requirements are guided by state and federal law.

Working together, we will make our school a positive, supportive, and safe community in which to learn and grow.

Take a Break

For certain behaviors or violations of the student code of conduct, "take a break" or "time out" can be utilized by any staff member. The purpose of this is to remove a student from a situation and provide them a chance to collect themselves, calm down, rejoin the group, and be prepared to discuss the behavior with the adult involved. "Take a break" or "Time out" usually takes place in a

separate area of the classroom/school campus. Examples of when this intervention would be appropriate include, but are not limited to:

- Not following directions of an adult
- Disruptive/distracted behavior
- Disrupting the learning of the student and/or other students.

Buddy Classroom

If a child is not responding to “take a break” interventions or needs a longer break or to leave the classroom, they may be sent to a buddy classroom. This can prevent a problem from escalating and allow the student some space and time during which they can collect themselves and rejoin the group prepared to work. Upon reentry to the classroom, the teacher will have a conversation with the student about what happened, what needs to happen next, and how to avoid the problem in the future.

Consequences

Effective consequences must be logical, related, reasonable, and respectful. Choice of consequences issued depends on the severity of the behavior and previously attempted interventions. Based on the behavior, and at the discretion of the adult in charge, they may include (but are not limited to):

- Loss of up to 10 minutes of recess
- Alternate work space
- Separate supervised recess
- Telephone call home
- Community or school service
- Conference with family, principal, student, and teacher
- An “apology of action” plan developed by the student and staff member(s) appropriate to the behavior
- Behavior contract
- After-school Hour of Accountability
- Temporary suspension from before/after school programs
- Loss of bus privileges

A staff member may immediately remove a student or students from the classroom or playground if there’s a serious rule violation that:

- Constitutes an immediate threat to the health and safety of any person or persons.
- Gravely violates acceptable standards of behavior.

Please refer to the Common Policies and Procedures later in this handbook for more information regarding the Mohawk Trail Regional School District’s policies on these topics.

SUSPENSION PROCEDURES

In School Suspension

In-school suspension will be served in a supervised room designated by the principal. All in-school suspensions will begin the day of the offense and will continue for the length of the suspension as

determined by the Principal. School work will be assigned and completed by the end of the day. Parents/guardians will be notified of the infraction and the suspension date(s). A re-entry meeting will be arranged with the principal, the student, parents/guardians, and any other staff member(s) involved, prior to the student's return to the classroom. The purpose of the meeting is to resolve issues around the suspension and discuss a behavior plan and conditions for the successful return of the student to the classroom.

Out of School Suspension

In very rare circumstances where the severity of the infraction warrants a more serious consequence, students may be suspended from school. Out of school suspension is a very serious issue. By law, students may only be excluded from school after other interventions have proved unsuccessful or one of the following infractions occur:

- Possession of a dangerous weapon
- Possession of a controlled substance
- Assault on a member of the educational staff
- A felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school, as provided in M.G.L. c. 71, Sections 37H or 37H½.

By law, students who are suspended from school are guaranteed the following rights: ● an oral or written notice of the charge(s) against them

- An explanation of the evidence against them
- The opportunity to present their side of the story to an impartial decision-maker (who may be a school administrator)

The principal will notify the child's parents/guardians immediately by phone (or other agreed upon method of communication) and by letter explaining the reason for the suspension. Notice of the suspension and the hearing as outlined above, must occur before the student is asked to leave school, except when the student presents an immediate threat to self, staff, or other students or is disruptive to the school environment. Students who serve an out of school suspension will be required to complete all classwork and homework assigned during the suspension.

A meeting will be arranged with the principal, the student, parents/guardians, and any other staff member(s) involved, prior to the student's return to school. The purpose of this meeting is to resolve issues around the suspension and discuss a behavior plan and conditions for the successful return of the student to school.

Please refer to the Common Policies and Procedures later in this handbook for more information regarding the Mohawk Trail Regional School District's policies on suspensions, as well as discipline procedures for Special Education students.

FIELD TRIP PROCEDURES

Field trips play a critical role in the educational process in our school. We believe that learning experiences extend beyond the confines of the school building and, in that spirit, look for ways to incorporate field trips into our school curriculum. Field trips also open students' senses and minds to the larger world beyond their home community. In order for field trips to be successfully planned and carried out, the following guidelines will be followed at Colrain Central School.

1. Field trips will be planned primarily by teachers as an extension of their classroom curriculum. Students are expected to attend field trips unless there are extenuating circumstances. Because field trips are strongly linked to the curriculum of the school, students missing them inevitably miss a vital and memorable part of their learning. We understand at times students may not be able to attend field trips. If students cannot attend the field trip, they may stay home. This will be considered an excused absence. In the case that students attend school, they will be supervised and assigned independent work.
2. Teachers planning a field trip must fill out a field trip permission form that is available in the front office. All field trips must be approved by the principal. Additional approval from the superintendent (and school committee) must be obtained for all out-of-state field trips.
3. It will be the responsibility of the teacher to arrange for any needed transportation for a field trip and to raise whatever money will be needed to pay for all aspects of the trip. Some funds are usually available each year to help defray the cost of field trips. Any additional money needed may be obtained through fundraising activities or by direct payment from parents/guardians/students following a predetermined schedule.
4. A reasonable number of chaperones must accompany each class on a field trip.(i.e., a 1:8 ratio for shorter day trips and a 1:5 ratio for extended trips). All chaperones will be required to pass a CORI/SORI check, have proof of insurance on file, and sign off on the Chaperone Guidelines. Failure to comply will likely result in the chaperone's not participating in future field trips.
5. Preparation time for each field trip should commensurate with the length and distance of the trip. It will be the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the trip to arrange for parent/guardian meetings to discuss preparations for trips lasting longer than one school day.
6. If for any reason it is felt that a child should not be allowed to accompany the class on a field trip for disciplinary reasons, that child may be kept at school at the teacher's request. Families would be notified of this decision.
7. All school rules and procedures are in place on any field trip. Children and chaperones are expected to behave on field trips in accordance with these rules and procedures unless changes in expectations have been made prior to the trip and are clear to all participants.

LIBRARY AND MEDIA PROCEDURES

Library and School Materials

All children are scheduled for a regular library period each week. At this time, students are encouraged to check out a book or other learning materials for their own pleasure. We request that parents/guardians cooperate in helping to see that all library books and other school materials taken home are returned in proper condition at the specified time. Parents/guardians will be asked to replace any books or materials which are lost or destroyed by their children during the school year.

Media Guidelines

In recent years, the term “media” has been expanded to include such things as magazines, computers, videos and multi-faceted learning tools, as well as audiotapes, CDs, DVDs, fiction and nonfiction books, and other printed material. In an effort to keep control over the types of media being viewed and utilized by students at school, guidelines need to be put in place which regulate the use of media at Colrain Central School.

- Students will be allowed to take books and other printed materials out of the library for use at home. The librarian will guide students to materials that are appropriate for their age, development and reading levels. Individual classroom libraries will follow the same guidelines, with teachers serving as the librarian.
- Movies and other video productions are often used by teachers to enhance their curriculum. Teachers may use any G-rated movie without parental permission. If a video rated PG is to be used, the teacher is responsible for notifying parents/guardians and receiving permission for their child to view the video.
- Computer software that is used by students will be screened for content and appropriateness. Students using reference software or the internet for research will be carefully monitored so that they are prevented from accessing information that is inappropriate for them.
- When using the Internet, students will be closely monitored and, if possible, inappropriate materials will be locked out of student access. An Internet Use policy is now in place in the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. All students must sign the Internet Use Agreement form before being allowed access to school computers.
- Music cassettes, CDs, or MP3 files that are brought to school by students or supplied as part of the music program at the school must meet certain guidelines for content. Music that contains lyrics unsuitable for elementary students will not be allowed in the school.

ACADEMICS AND ASSESSMENTS

Homework

Homework assignments provide ongoing opportunities for our students to learn good study habits, to develop a sense of responsibility for task completion, to learn time management, to reinforce skills, and to extend or enrich their classroom learning experiences. Both the school and the home must assume their respective responsibilities if homework expectations are to be successfully met. Family cooperation and two-way communication is crucial in this matter.

At the primary level, homework does not necessarily follow a structured routine, but is rather given at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Homework at this level may be given if a child has not completed work assigned for class time or as an extension of work being done by the class on a particular thematic unit. Many assignments given to primary students require some parental participation. It is expected that all assignments will be completed with accuracy, neatness and effort.

At the intermediate level, a structured schedule will be followed for homework. At this level, homework is expected to be completed independently and with 70% accuracy. Meetings may be scheduled with parents/guardians of students not completing homework on a regular basis. The following schedule has been set for homework at the intermediate level:

- Grade 4: At least 30 minutes of homework may be given per day, Monday-Thursday. Book reports and/or other long-range projects may be assigned periodically.
- Grade 5: At least 45 minutes of homework may be given per day, Monday-Thursday. Long

range projects may be assigned periodically.

- Grade 6: At least 1 hour of homework may be given per day, Monday-Friday. Long range projects may be assigned frequently.

Homework will be assigned to meet the needs and abilities of each student. Expectations for homework will be adjusted as needed to suit those needs and abilities. If a child takes substantially more or less than the suggested times to complete homework assignments, parents/guardians should contact the teacher. It is extremely important that families communicate openly with their child's teacher whenever questions or concerns arise.

When homework is assigned, we expect children to complete it. If children do not finish assignments on a regular basis, they will be required to complete them at school. This may happen during recess breaks or before or after school. In this way, we are working to help children succeed in the handling of their responsibilities. We also encourage students to arrange with their teacher a schedule for completing incomplete or overdue assignments. This initiative on the part of students serves to further reinforce their acceptance of responsibility for their own school work.

The staff will, in turn, strive to make assignments at all grade levels appropriate and relevant to the work being done in class. We will also monitor the amount of homework given, so as to remain consistent with the above guidelines. Additionally, teachers will make certain that all necessary directions and materials for completing homework are sent home with students at the time the assignment is given.

By working together cooperatively, parents/guardians, students, and teachers can make homework a productive, workable part of the education process. This will also help instill life lessons about responsibility and time management. In addition, we can help our children understand that education is an important part of life and that it takes the efforts and commitment of all to make an educational career successful.

Standardized Testing

A variety of assessments are administered each year to children in all grades. This testing includes the state mandated Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests for students in grades 3-6, which cover the areas of reading, writing, language, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, students in all grades are required each year to take a variety of district assessments. These assessments may change from year to year, but the data collected helps to inform our instruction. The results from such testing are shared with families. In addition, book tests or screening tests, as well as regular ongoing assessments will be administered to students in all grades as a regular part of the grade level curriculum.

Reporting Pupil Progress

The staff at Colrain Central School feels it is extremely important for the school and home to maintain close contact during the school year. Therefore, we urge all parents/guardians to either call the school or make an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns that they may have about their child's program, progress, or school activities.

Report cards are issued twice per year. In addition, two family/teacher conferences are scheduled, one in the fall and one in the spring. We sincerely hope, however, that you do not wait for these

regular reporting times to have a question or concern addressed. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any concerns about your child's progress.

TELEPHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Telephone Use

In order to keep the telephone lines open for school business, the Colrain Central School maintains a policy whereby students are encouraged not to make or receive calls at school unless there is an emergency. All after-school plans should be made before children leave for school in the morning, and appropriate notes concerning changes from the standard routine must be brought into school in the morning. We will always deliver messages from a parent/guardian to children during the school day. However, unless there is an emergency, we try not to interrupt our students' academic program by having them come to the telephone. If a staff member receiving a call is in class, unless there is an emergency, a message will be taken and given to the staff member at an appropriate time. The staff member will return the call as soon as possible.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

While families stay connected through cell phones, Colrain Central School does not allow cellphone use during the school day. If brought to school, cell phones must remain in backpacks at all times or be left with classroom teachers for safekeeping. This applies to all electronic devices. If a device is taken out of the backpack, the teacher will remove the device and hold it in their desk or take it to the front office where it will remain until the end of the day. For a first offense, the student can pick the device up after school; if it happens again, a family member will need to pick up the device.

Recording Devices

Recording devices (both audio and video) are not permitted in classrooms without prior consent of the teacher and the administration. Unauthorized use of digital images, both still and video, will be considered a violation of the code of conduct.

BUILDING USE PROCEDURES

Colrain Central School belongs to the town of Colrain and is intended to be a true town building in every sense of the word. Therefore, it is the general policy of the school to permit the use of the school building for a variety of educational and civic purposes insofar as it is practical to do so without interfering with regular school activities.

Anyone wishing to use the building for such a purpose should contact the school office for a district building use request form at least a month prior to the date(s) requested, if possible, in order to facilitate planning. To the greatest degree possible, fees for building use will be kept at a minimum. However, fees will be charged for personal profit events and to cover any additional services required of school personnel. In addition, any needed repairs or replacement of damaged school property will be charged to the group responsible.

Use of the school's kitchen, cafeteria, and gymnasium will be regulated by specific guidelines. For each activity one person must be responsible for assuring that these guidelines for use are

followed. Spaces must be cleaned and secured. If additional custodial help is required, a fee will be charged. Specific guidelines for each of these spaces are as follows:

- Kitchen: Kitchen facilities may be used only after having met with the school's kitchen staff to ensure that the use of equipment has been explained and understood. It may be required that a member of the kitchen staff be present at the event. If so, a fee may be charged to compensate this staff member.
- Gymnasium: In order to protect our gym floor, it is advised that only sneakers or socks be worn in the gymnasium unless special floor coverings (made available by the school) are used. No food or drinks are to be taken into the gymnasium at any time. Equipment belonging to the school may be used if prior arrangements have been made.
- Cafeteria: Groups using the cafeteria are expected to utilize this area only, unless otherwise stipulated. Use of the cafeteria does not automatically mean use of the kitchen facilities.

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

Animals in classrooms have always been an accepted tradition at Colrain Central School. Having animals in the building has allowed students to safely observe nature and life cycles. Classroom animals have been used as a means of teaching children the importance and responsibility of caring for living creatures. Animals have been used by teachers in a variety of ways, such as for "show and tell" exhibits brought into the classroom for a brief period, as long-term subjects for study and observation, and as classroom pets. In order for animals in the classroom to be a viable part of the total curriculum at CCS, it is necessary that well-defined rules be established and observed. Therefore, the following guidelines need to be followed if animals are to be allowed in the school:

1. Before any animal is allowed in a classroom, even for a brief visit, the teacher must make sure that the animal poses no danger to anyone and that there are no children in the room that are allergic to the animal.
2. If animals are to be kept in a classroom for a prolonged period of time, the teacher must assume responsibility for feeding, caring for, and cleaning up after the animal. If students are involved in this care, they must be properly trained on how to do this and supervised carefully by the teacher at all times.
3. All animals need to be kept in secure living quarters at all times. No animals should be allowed to run freely within the building.
4. If an animal should die while under the care of the classroom, the teacher must take time to meet with students to discuss the death in a realistic yet caring manner, allowing students the opportunity to grieve in their own way.
5. The teacher is the final decision-maker on whether or not to have animals in the classroom. No animal should be brought into any classroom without the consent of the teacher, even for a brief visit.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The staff at Colrain Central School strongly believes that students should come to school dressed appropriately for learning and for academic pursuits. They should also have clothing and footwear suitable for Physical Education classes and for recess. The staff understands that reasonable differences in expectations will occur based upon the grade level of students. What is appropriate

and reasonable attire for a primary student may not be appropriate and reasonable for an intermediate student and vice versa. The Colrain staff realizes that trends and styles change over time. However, clothing, hats or jewelry with inappropriate pictures, words or messages will not be allowed in school. Items advertising or promoting tobacco, alcohol, violence (including images of weapons) or controlled substances are prohibited. Clothing with messages demeaning to or oppressive toward groups or individuals is not allowed.

Issues around student clothing will be addressed as they arise.

HEALTH SERVICES

The Health Office at Colrain Central School is staffed by a nurse daily from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and from 7:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. at the Mohawk Trail Regional School. There is always a Registered Nurse on call whenever there is not a Registered Nurse covering the Colrain health office.

The nurse is available to do the following:

- Provide first aid and illness assessment.
- Provide initial emergency care.
- Administer medications.
- Perform treatments and procedures.
- Perform mandated screenings.
- Act as a health resource for students, caregivers, and staff.
- Maintain the health records, which include at a minimum medical history, immunizations, physical examinations, screening results, and emergency information.
- Help to identify healthcare needs, make appropriate referrals, attend IEP and 504 meetings if a health issue is involved, and may serve on Committees.
- Coordinate with families, healthcare professionals, students, and staff, to develop and implement comprehensive individualized healthcare plans (IHP) for students with significant health concerns.
- Monitor any students with concussions and their return to academics and physical activity.

All Health-Related Services are Fully Confidential

Please refer to the Common Policies and Procedures that follow in this handbook for more information regarding the Mohawk Trail Regional School District's policies on health-related topics.