

Hillcrest Elementary School



Directory & Family Handbook 2018-2019

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Phone: 413-863-9526 Fax: 413-863-3284
www.gmrtd.org

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Si usted desea que este documento sea traducido por favor contáctese:

Jimena De Pareja: 413-695-9593

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HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

30 Griswold Street, Turners Falls MA

Sarah Burstein, Principal

Phone (413) 863-9526

Fax (413) 863-3284

September 2018

Dear Hillcrest Families,

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year! Along with the entire Hillcrest faculty and staff, I am looking forward to a year filled with positive relationships, engaging curriculum and plenty of rich learning. In order to build strong connections between home and school, we rely on ongoing, two-way communication. Your child's classroom teacher is your best resource for information about the grade level curriculum, classroom happenings, and schoolwide events. Our teachers are committed to reaching out to you and they welcome your ideas, questions and concerns. In addition to our classroom teachers, you can also look forward to receiving important updates from other staff members including our school nurse, our administrative assistant, and me. You may reach us via telephone, email or a simple "backpack note."

One excellent source of information about Hillcrest and the Gill-Montague Regional School District is this Directory and Family Handbook. Here you will find plenty of details about the "nuts and bolts" of the school day as well as policy information, curriculum overviews, and the school calendar. It's important for you to review this Handbook and to keep it as a handy reference during the school year. Please share the relevant information with your child and use this time as an opportunity to talk about the expectations for appropriate, respectful school behavior.

In addition to this Handbook, you can look forward to weekly Friday News notes from me and monthly Hillcrest Newsletters from our teachers. You can also find school information on the school website (Go to www.gmrtd.org, click on Our Schools, then click on Hillcrest.), and our Facebook page. And, in order to really get to know us, please be sure to attend our Back to School Open House, our monthly All School Meetings, parent conferences in November and March and our wonderful Friends of Hillcrest events. All of our Hillcrest families are invited to participate in Friends of Hillcrest meetings and family events. This group is dedicated to building support for teachers, students and families, so please join in!

Of course, there is no substitute for real, face-to-face conversation and I look forward to having many of those with you and with your children throughout the school year. I have opportunities each day to talk with your children, to answer their questions, and to learn more about their likes and dislikes as well as their hopes and dreams. I look forward to talking with you and I encourage you to give me a call, to send me an email or to set up a meeting time to chat. Here's to another amazing school year filled with learning, growth and rich conversations!

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Burstein

Ms. Sarah Burstein, Principal

GMRSD MISSION STATEMENT

Challenging and supporting every student to succeed through strong leadership, excellent teaching, and community engagement.

DISTRICT CORE VALUES

Persistence: Smart is something you become, not something you are.

Integrity: Doing the right thing, even when no one is looking.

Empathy: Being able and willing to understand another's perspective.

Continuous Learning: Constantly expanding one's understanding.

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to help our students become creative, caring and competent learners, preparing their way for a successful secondary education and supporting parents' aspirations for their children.

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VISION STATEMENT

We envision the Hillcrest Elementary School as a learning community built on collaboration, compassion and consistency; a school environment that is safe, supportive and challenging; a school where family involvement and social responsibility are essential to academic success.

DISTRICT DIRECTORY

Dr. Michael Sullivan, Superintendent	863-9324
Ms. Sabrina Blanchard, Exec. Assistant to the Supt.	863-9324
Ms. Sarah Burstein, Early Childhood Coordinator	863-9526
Ms. Dianne Ellis, Director of Special Ed & Student Services	863-9311
Ms. Heather Holmes, Director of Food Services	863-7315
TBA, Facilities Manager	863-3261
Ms. Tina Mahaney, Technology Coordinator/Educational Data Services Coordinator	863-7510

Visit our district website for further information: www.gmrdsd.org

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Jane Oakes, Chair

Haley Anderson

Heather Katsoulis, Vice Chair

Jennifer Lively

April Reipold, Secretary

Cassie Damkoehler

Michael Langknecht, Treasurer

Valeria Smith

School Committee meetings are at 6:30 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month in the High School TV studio. All meetings are open to the public

Hillcrest Elementary School Council

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 71, Section 59C), every public school in the Commonwealth must have a School Council. The role of the Hillcrest Elementary School Council is to identify and prioritize the needs of the Hillcrest Elementary School community and to advise the Principal in the development and implementation of the Hillcrest Elementary School Improvement Plan. The Hillcrest School Council meets regularly beginning in October. These meetings are open to the public.

The School Council is co-chaired by the Hillcrest Elementary School Principal and a member chosen by the group at its first meeting. Council members are elected annually for two year terms. The election will take place at the beginning of the school year. Parents who have been serving on the Council are welcome to re-submit their names. The Council also has teacher and staff representatives chosen by their peers, and community volunteer representatives appointed by the Principal.

Friends of Hillcrest Elementary School

Friends of Hillcrest has been created in an effort to organize fun events for the students and show appreciation for the staff as well as for the building and grounds at Hillcrest. In addition, we hope to increase family and community involvement in our school. Please look for upcoming family fun event dates, staff appreciation events and local fundraisers.

Our main goals are to: Encourage family engagement through events in and outside of school; Support teachers and staff through staff appreciation and teacher financial assistance for curriculum related requests; Raise money through local fundraisers (Fall, Winter, Spring) and several small fundraisers like Box Tops, Family Night Out, Stop & Shop A+ School Rewards. Some of our annual events will include Mums Sale, Family Movie Nights, Cocoa, Cookies & Crafts Night, Grounds Clean-Up Day and Staff Appreciation Week. Friends of Hillcrest meets monthly and all are welcome at these meetings. We encourage the involvement of all Hillcrest families.

Together we are *~Friends of Hillcrest~ every family member ~ every staff member.*

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STAFF DIRECTORY

Administration

Sarah Burstein, Principal

Administrative Assistant

Mary Prokowich

Teachers:

Preschool

Sarah Chase
Teresa Prevett
Chanda Waryas Welles

Kindergarten

Jessica Fox
Veronica Hirst
Lindsay Lesenski

Grade 1

Lauren Casey
Krista Matrishon
Lori Saylor
Kristy Smith

Special Subjects

TBA, Technology
Susan King, Music
Jocelyn Castro-Santos, Art
Ron Wood, Physical Education
Jessika Nadeau, Librarian

Special Education

Pam Reynolds
Michelle Tirrell

Reading Teacher

Laura Brown

English Language Learners

Lea Wulfkuhle

Specialists and Student Services:

Halina Radosz, Adjustment Counselor
Francis Liri, RN, Nurse
Linda Gordon, OT
Joann Donnelly, Speech
Gina Caputo, PT

Cafeteria Food Services:

Mary Savinski
Kim Watroba

Custodial/Maintenance:

Peter Cloutier

Paraprofessional Support Staff:

Lauri Aronstam
Ruben Baker-deKater
Kayla Biggs
Michelle Bednarski
Melissa Bradley
Sonya Conway
Nicole Day
Janet Dobias
Julie Kuklewicz
Sheri Leh
Sheri Little
Jimena Pareja
Ryan Sena
Carrie Tirrell

“NUTS & BOLTS”

Basic information to make life easier

Arrival/Departure:

Daily Arrival and Dismissal Routines

Our building will open at 8:00 each morning so that children can take part in our free, healthy breakfast program. All of our students are welcome to join us for breakfast; preschoolers must be accompanied by an adult during this time.

Arrival: Families who transport their children to school will have two *Arrival Options* this year:

- Front Traffic Circle: Rolling Drop-Off in the front traffic circle for first grade and kindergarten students only. If you choose to participate in Rolling Drop-Off, please keep in mind that you must follow all traffic regulations concerning school busses. Drivers must remain in the drop-off lane until they reach the front of the line; drivers may not cut out of the line when behind a school bus or school van. Please be aware of the flashing lights and stop signs on our school busses and school vans. Students should wait for a Hillcrest staff member to assist them in exiting the vehicle (passenger side only).
- Griswold Street Parking Lot Entrance: Park and walk your child to the door for all students (first grade, kindergarten and preschool students). This is *not* the location for Rolling Drop Off
- Hillcrest staff members will be on duty at both entrances to welcome your child beginning at 8:00 a.m. Please do not drop your child off at school prior to 8:00 a.m.

Departure: Families who transport their children home from school will pick their students up at the Griswold Street Parking Lot Entrance. Please be extra cautious as this lot gets crowded in the afternoons. Supervise your children carefully as you walk through the lot and be patient when parking and pulling out of the lot. There will be no Rolling Dismissal at the front traffic circle. This area will be used for bus dismissals only.

School Bus: Children who take the school bus will arrive and depart from the front traffic circle at the school’s main entrance.

Please note the official school day start and end times:

- Our school day begins **promptly** at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m.
- Our building opens for **breakfast** at 8:00. Students arriving at 8:00 will head directly to breakfast.
- Students who are not eating school breakfast may arrive at school between 8:20 and 8:30.
- Arrival after 8:30 a.m. is tardy.
- Early dismissal is any time before 3:15 p.m.

Arrival and dismissal are very busy times. These are not convenient times for impromptu conferences or conversations with teachers. Teachers are available to communicate via email or telephone during their prep periods or before and after school. You may also schedule a meeting time with our teachers by calling the main office or by sending an email.

Tardy Students: Students arriving after the official start time must report to the Main Office with a parent or caregiver for a tardy slip.

Additional Dismissal Information: We will not release your child to another adult without your permission. If you wish to designate someone other than yourself to pick up your child, **please send a note or call.** We will follow the regular dismissal plans for your child unless we hear from you directly. All children in Kindergarten **MUST** have an adult meet them at the bus stop each day. This will ensure that the student has been dropped at the correct location. If there is no adult at the stop, the student will be returned to the school and the family must pick the child up at school. If a parent designates an older sibling to meet the child, prior written notification must be received by both the school and the bus company.

Parent-scheduled early dismissal: Hillcrest students are actively engaged in learning until 3:15 each day. Dismissal before 3:15 is strongly discouraged because it is disruptive to student learning. Students will not be dismissed between 3:00 and 3:15 except in the case of true emergency. The main office staff will not be able to call down to classrooms between 3:00 and 3:15 for dismissals. Parents and caregivers will be asked to wait until the designated dismissal time. Please make non-emergency appointments for out-of-school time. When you must request that your child be dismissed early from school, please send in a note or call our office at 863-9526.

Dismissal of Sheffield Students: Families whose students attend both Sheffield and Hillcrest may make arrangements for their older students to take the school bus from Sheffield to Hillcrest at the end of the school day. This will allow older students to meet up with their parents or caregivers who are picking up Hillcrest students. Please send a note to the Sheffield Main Office to make these arrangements.

Student Attendance and Absences

Attendance: All Kindergarten and First Grade age children whose parent(s) reside in the town of Montague are eligible to attend Hillcrest Elementary School except in circumstances where a specialized program that meets a child's unique needs is offered in a different school in the Gill-Montague District. All parents with children of First through Fifth Grade age must either enroll them in public or private school or submit a plan for home schooling that is approved by the Director of Pupil Services and the Gill-Montague School Committee. In order to be enrolled in kindergarten, students must be five years old prior to September 1st.

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. School staff view it as one of our responsibilities to support families in ensuring that their child meet this important

expectation. In addition to communicating with parents if attendance problems arise, school staff will work with families to create a plan for successful school attendance. This may include partnering with outside social service agencies.

Parents of children attending our schools have responsibilities as well to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and in accordance with state law. Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays. A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school unless it's unavoidable. **Students are expected to be in class 180 school days.** Massachusetts State Law requires an attendance rate of 93% or no more than seven absences in a six month period. In instances of chronic or irregular absence due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

- It is the responsibility of parent(s)/legal guardians, whenever possible; to make appointments and plan vacations which do not conflict with regularly scheduled classes or school activities.
- It is the responsibility of the parents(s) to notify the school when a student is absent. A parental statement is required indicating the reason for absence. Note from parent(s) will be kept on file at the school, as they may be needed for documentation purposes. However, when the validity of the communication is questionable, the school will attempt to establish its authenticity.
- In the event of a student's absence, the absence will be considered to be accruing toward truancy as defined in Massachusetts statutes.
- A student who is participating in a school-sponsored activity and has received the prior approval of the principal will receive an excused absence. An unexcused absence is defined as any absence in which a student is absent from class without approval of the school administration.
- Each student is responsible for making arrangements with teachers for the instruction missed during any absence approved by the school administration.

Student Absence Notification Program: Every child's school attendance is recorded and tracked according to state mandate. **A Parent/Guardian is expected to call the school any day their child is absent by 8:30 am. A note from the parent/guardian explaining student absence is required upon return. A note from the doctor is required for an extended medical absence of three days or more.** Each Principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal or designee shall meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee,

the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies. When absence or tardiness becomes a chronic problem, GMRSD consults with the Northwestern District Attorney's *School Is Where It's At* program.

School Choice: Families from outside the town of Montague can send their children to Hillcrest Elementary School if there is an available seat. Families who are opting to choice their children into Hillcrest can apply online and submit their application to the Superintendent's Office, which handles matters relating to school choice. Families are notified by letter directly from the Superintendent's Office and need to register at the Office of Pupil Services upon receiving confirmation of acceptance.

School Calendar: The school calendar is set by the Gill-Montague School Committee. Students attend a minimum of 180 days of school. There are a series of scheduled half days that are set aside for professional development and parent-teacher conferences. The full school calendar for 2018-2019 is included in this booklet. Please check the calendar for the half days in order to make the necessary child care arrangements.

Early dismissals due to stormy weather: If it becomes necessary to close school before 3:15 p.m., a pre-recorded telephone message is sent out to all families in the district through the All-Call system. Information regarding Early Dismissals will also be posted at www.gmrdsd.org and announced on radio stations WRSI 95.3 and WHAI 98.3 AM.

School Cancellation due to stormy weather: School cancellation and delay announcements will be sent via One-Call phone system and will be posted at www.gmrdsd.org They will also be announced on radio WRSI 95.3 FM, WHAI 98.3 AM, and TV channels 22 and 40. Delayed openings are based on the regular start time of the school day.

Delayed Opening due to stormy weather: A Two Hour Delay means that the school day begins at 10:30 a.m. and ends at the regular dismissal time, 3:00 for preschoolers and 3:15 for kindergarten and first grade students. On Two Hour Delay days, breakfast will not be served at school. Students may arrive at school between 10:15 and 10:30 on these days. There is No School for Half-Day Preschoolers on Two Hour Delay Days. Students will be dismissed at the regular dismissal times – 3:00 for Full Day Preschoolers and 3:15 for Kindergarten and First Grade students.

Delayed Opening on Scheduled Early Release Days: In the event of a Two Hour Delay on a scheduled Early Release Day, the Early Release Day will be cancelled and the elementary school day will run from 10:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. (3:00 dismissal for preschoolers)

Homelessness

If, for any reason, you find your home situation such that you do not currently have a place for your family to live, you need to know that the school district will help you by making sure that your children can still attend their schools on a daily basis, receive transportation, meals and all

additional supports to help you in such a difficult time. This is not only the right thing for us to do; it is also both federal and state law. Don't wait. Call the Principal at 863-9526.

Transportation

Bicycles and Scooters: Children may ride their bicycles/scooters to school with parental permission. A properly fitted HELMET is required of all riders. Once on school property, to ensure student safety, children must walk their bicycles and scooters. Children must also walk their bicycles and scooters at crosswalks or whenever crossing the road. There is a bike rack located at the front of the school for all bicycles and scooters. Bicycles and scooters will not be allowed inside the school.

All Private Vehicles: For safety sake, we rigorously enforce all posted driving and parking rules. Drivers must use extreme care when approaching the school, especially in crosswalks and drop-off areas. Parents transporting children to school by car are expected to be familiar with and follow posted instructions with regards to traffic direction, drop-off and parking. Never leave your car idling for an extended time on school property. Please be aware of the Massachusetts Anti-Idling Law. It is illegal in Massachusetts for cars to idle for more than five minutes. (MA General Laws, Ch 14, Chapter 90, Section 16A). Never leave a vehicle in a NO PARKING zone, even momentarily. Never pass a school bus or van with its red lights flashing.

Parking: All visitors should park in designated parking spaces. **There is NO PARKING in the Fire Zone** or along the main driveway. There are handicapped parking spaces available in both parking lots. These spaces should only be used by vehicles with a handicapped parking permit.

Bus: Students living more than one and one half miles from the school are eligible for free transportation on the school bus. Only kindergarten students living within the mile and a half radius of the school will be picked up by the school bus.

Students who do not typically ride the bus may do so on special occasions, such as when invited over a friend's house, if there is room on the bus and the student has a written note from his or her parent informing the school of the change in departure plans. Please do not plan on requesting transportation for a large group of students, such as to a birthday party.

Bus Safety: All students riding school buses within the District served by F.M. Kuzmeskus, Inc. are expected to follow a few basic guidelines while riding the bus. These guidelines are put in place to assist the school bus driver with the safest possible transportation to and from school each day. Students are expected to behave in an orderly fashion on the bus and respond to the driver promptly and respectfully. Riding the bus to and from school is a privilege. Physical and emotional safety is the primary concern. All students are expected to follow "school rules" whenever they are on the bus and at the bus stop. In addition, the following simple rules must be adhered to:

- Students must remain seated, facing forward, while the bus is in motion.
- Students must keep their hands to themselves.
- Students must use "inside voices" meaning yelling and screaming must be avoided.

- Students' personal belongings must be kept inside their book bag or knapsack.
- Weapons of any sort may not be transported on the school bus.
- Vandalism of vehicle or its contents is not permitted.
- No eating is allowed on the bus for the safety of our students with potentially life threatening food allergies.

We also expect students to show responsible behavior around the bus and at the bus stop by:

- Walking whenever they are in the vicinity of the bus.
- Waiting for the driver's directions to board, disembark or cross the street.

Parents of all bus riders are asked to frequently discuss with their children appropriate behavior for riding the bus.

Consequences for Violation of Expectations: Any student found in violation of the above Safety Rules will receive Bus Conduct Reports with the following consequences:

1st Report - School official meets with the student to discuss the inappropriate behavior. Notations regarding meeting are made on the Conduct Report and it is signed by the student and parent and returned to the bus driver.

2nd Report – Parent must meet with the School Official to discuss the inappropriate behavior. Notations regarding meeting are made on the Conduct Report and it is signed by the student and parent and returned to the bus driver.

3rd Report – Student bus privileges are suspended for a minimum of two school days. Parent must meet with the School Official *prior to the student's bus privileges being reinstated*. Notations regarding meeting are made on the Conduct Report and it is signed by the student and parent and returned to the bus driver.

Subsequent infractions may result in long term or permanent suspension from the school bus. Additionally, severe violations may result in immediate disciplinary action/suspension from the bus regardless of the number of bus reports previously issued. *In the event of bus suspension, parents remain responsible for their child's attendance at school.*

Breakfast, Lunch and Snack **School Nutrition Services**

Breakfast: Breakfast is free to all Hillcrest students and is available from 8:00 until 8:25 in the cafeteria. Breakfast options follow the USDA Nutrition Standards for school breakfast programs. In the event there is a school delay, breakfast will not be served. Please be sure to plan accordingly for your child in the event of a school delay.

Lunch: Lunch is free for all Hillcrest students every school day. Our school lunches follow the USDA Nutrition Standards for school lunch programs. Meal calendars that detail breakfast, lunch and snack offerings are distributed monthly.

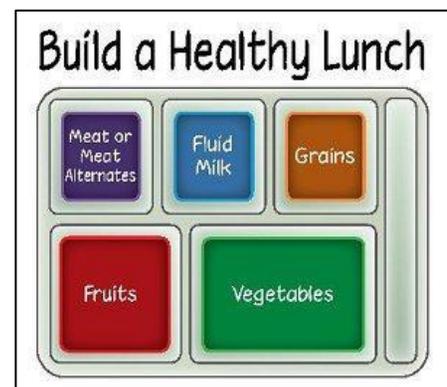
Why are breakfast and lunch free for all Hillcrest students? Hillcrest participates in the Community Eligibility Program. For more information on this, please see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>.

Daily Snack: Students will have snack once a day. Hillcrest Elementary School is excited to be a part of the USDA Fresh, Fruits & Vegetables Snack Program. Fresh fruit or vegetables will be offered daily during snack time. If you choose to send your child with a snack from home, please choose a low sugar option such as fruit, vegetables, cheese or yogurt. Please remember that candy is not allowed at school.

Please send your child with a beverage to have with their snack (water or juice). Snack milk is available for purchase in the cafeteria for 45 cents. Please note that high sugar juices, soda and sports drinks are not allowed at school.

What is the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program? The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is a federally assisted program that provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to elementary students during the school day. The goal of the FFVP is to improve children's overall diet and create healthier eating habits to impact their present and future health.

Peanut/Food Allergies: Please notify school food service staff and inform the school nurse if your child has a food allergy. Hillcrest cafeteria does not serve any peanut butter or peanut products and provides a safe and inclusive cafeteria environment. We have a designated allergy-friendly seating area to be used during meal times. Efforts will be made to ensure a child is not sitting alone in this area. Please refer to the district website <http://www.gmrtd.org/> within the *GMRSD policy manual* for additional information on our district policy regarding food allergies.



Payment Methods: You can pre-pay for milk using the program <https://www.payforit.net> or you can also send your child in with cash. Please refer to the GMRSD Food Services webpage at www.gmrtd.org for more detailed information.

If you are interested in additional information on the USDA school meal patterns and requirements, please see the link below:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>

Or call the Food Service Manager if any questions should arise: (413)863-7506.

Health & Medications

School Health Services: The School Nurse is available during the course of the school day to provide emergency care and assess the student's health needs providing appropriate nursing

service and interventions. The School Nurse provides the safe administration of prescribed medication(s) and over the counter medication(s), and/or continues a given plan of treatment on any student. The School Nurse provides specific and confidential health education. There will be as needed contact with parents, teachers, and health care providers to ensure the student's needs are met. Most importantly, the School Nurse advocates for the rights of each individual student including those with special needs.

The School Nurse is responsible for an ongoing review of all students' immunization status per Federal and State guidelines on a continual basis throughout the student's academic career until graduation. There will be grade specific assessments of a student's height, weight, vision, and hearing done during the course of the school year.

IMPORTANT MEDICAL POLICIES YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Allergy Policy: Our goal is to keep every child safe and healthy. It is the parents' responsibility to inform our school nurse of any allergies your child has and any accommodations needed.

Life Threatening Allergy Policy

In our school community, we have children with potential Life Threatening Allergies (LTA). GRMSD has developed a Life Threatening Allergy Policy Statement. This statement can be found on our district website (www.gmrtd.org and then click on the "GMRSD Policy Manual.") Here is a list of the procedures that we will be following at Hillcrest Elementary School:

1. Our cafeterias will have a nut and peanut free table carefully labeled, washed, and monitored.
2. Our cafeterias will not serve nut/peanuts or peanut products including peanut butter.
3. Children will be allowed to bring peanut butter sandwiches from home to eat in the cafeteria.
4. All children eating peanuts or peanut butter at lunch will be taught and required to wash hands before leaving for their classrooms.
5. In the event that your child is in a classroom with a child who has a LTA, your child will not be allowed to bring nuts, peanuts, or peanut products into that classroom. Arrangements will be made for your child to have nuts, peanuts, or peanut products at lunch, but they will NOT be allowed in the classroom.
6. Classrooms with children who have LTA of any kind will be monitored closely. Parents and children will receive extra information and education concerning that LTA.

Please report any allergies that your child may have to our school nurse, Nina Thayer.

Medical Files: Massachusetts state law requires that no child be allowed to enter school without the required immunizations. Parents will be notified in writing and by telephone if the students' records are not in proper order and are given a reasonable date to comply. The child will then be excluded from school until immunized as required.

All students are required to have a medical file that includes:

- Up to date immunization certificate
- Evidence of lead screening, which includes the results from the screening,
- A recent physical examination,
- Information of any known medical problem or condition.

When Your Child Isn't Feeling Well at School: Children are sent to the nurse by their classroom teachers for symptoms such as headache, stomachache, feeling feverish, vomiting and diarrhea. The nurse will assess the child's condition and, if need be, ask the child to remain in the Health Office until a parent or other family member can be reached.

Other conditions requiring immediate action: Contagious conditions such as, but not limited to, scabies, pinkeye, vomiting, diarrhea and fever over 100F require that a child be sent home. The child may return to school when evidence is presented that the condition has been treated and it is no longer contagious (doctor's note). The child may return to school if free of symptoms for 24 hours without medication. Please call our School Nurse for advice on specific disease procedures.

Medication Policy: Your child may occasionally need to take medicine at school. For temporary disbursement of medicine, parents (children are not allowed to carry medicine to school) must bring the following:

- Medicine in original container (prescription bottle) to school nurse (Some parents find it convenient to have the pharmacy give them 2 bottles, one for home and one for school.)
- A signed note by parent indicating dosage and time to school nurse

When children need medication on a daily basis (prescription or OTC), parents must bring the following to our school nurse:

- Signed consent by parent or legal guardian on school form.
- Written medication order signed by your child's physician on school form.
- Medicine in its original its container.

Please Note:

- This includes cough drops and sunscreen. Children may not carry cough drops or sunscreen to school.
- Medication will not be given at noon on early release days unless prior arrangements have been made with the school nurse.

Keep Your Child Home if She Displays Any of the Following Symptoms:

- *Fever of 100 degrees or higher:* It is advised that a child stay home fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- *Diarrhea:* If not caused by medication, children must kept at home until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours.
- *Vomiting:* Children who have vomited must be kept home for 24 hours.
- *Impetigo:* This skin infection is characterized by sores that usually appear first in the facial area. Children with this condition must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours, and all lesions should be dry before returning.
- *Strep Throat:* Your child must stay home until treated with antibiotics for a minimum of 24 hours.
- *Chicken Pox:* Children must be kept home as soon as the rash appears and remain home approximately one week, or until all sores are dry and scabbed over. Please notify the

school when your child has the chicken pox so we may notify other parents of possible exposure.

- *Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)*: This is a contagious infection characterized by a yellow discharge from the eye and tearing. The eye may be reddish in color and itchy. Children with this condition must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school and all discharge must be gone.

PEDICULOSIS POLICY

Gill-Montague Regional School District, in agreement with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, and the Centers for Disease Control, recognizes that no disease process is associated with pediculosis (head lice), a common problem among school-children. However, since the condition can be transmitted to others, proper and successful treatment is essential. Research has shown that screenings in school do little to reduce the incidence of head lice, which is primarily spread by direct head-to-head contact. Pediculosis is best prevented when parents check their children throughout the school year at home. The school community will work cooperatively with families, using approaches recommended by public health and medical experts. Up-to-date resources on prevention, identification and treatment of head lice will be available from the school nurses and shared through school communications. The district program to manage head lice will be reviewed periodically in consultation with the district physician, school nurses and building administrators to ensure it is following best practice and meeting the needs of the district and its families.

GMRSD Head Lice Control Protocol at School

- Families are encouraged to check their children regularly during the school year and anytime a child is having symptoms.
- The school nurse or other trained person will check a student's head if he or she is demonstrating symptoms, and if requested to do so by a parent.
- If active head lice are confirmed, the parent or guardian will be notified as soon as possible that prompt, proper treatment is needed. The child may remain in school until the end of the school day, but will be discouraged from direct or close head contact with others.
- Information on identification and life cycle of head lice will be provided through the school nurse, as well as guidance on treatment. The family is encouraged to contact their medical provider for recommendations and advice. Families should check all household members and notify all close contacts of the student.
- On return to school, the child must be accompanied by a parent/adult and report to the nurse's office for a head check and to review the treatment given. A student who has some remaining nits after treatment may stay in school. The focus for the family will be on following treatment instructions exactly, and on checking and combing the child's hair daily for the next 10-14 days at home.

- The student will be re-checked by the school nurse at weekly intervals for two weeks and as needed. School attendance will not be restricted. The nurse can offer extra help to families of children who are repeatedly or chronically infested, and provide reminders to the school community to regularly check children at home.
- If several cases of head lice are confirmed in a class, the school nurse will consult the district physician and building principal regarding the need for confidential letters home to notify parents/guardians of classmates.

Fluoride Program: Our school is fortunate to be able to offer students a weekly free fluoride mouth rinse program sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Parents will receive a permission form to sign and return. Only children with signed permission forms may participate in the fluoride mouth rinse program.

Fragrances at School: Please remember that Hillcrest is a Fragrance-Free School. There are members of our school community who are very sensitive to fragrances. In some cases, exposure to fragrances can provoke a **severe allergic reaction** requiring medical attention. Please do not send your child to school wearing scented lotions, scented hair products, perfumes, or body sprays. Also, please be aware that scented laundry products, especially fabric softeners, can also have a negative health impact. Please try to limit your use of these laundry products whenever possible.

Managing the Care of Students with Athletic Concussions

Research has estimated that 5-10% of high school or college contact sports athletes sustain a concussion each year. These estimates likely understate the true incidence of concussion. In one investigation over 50% of high school football athletes did not report their injury to a parent, coach, or medical professional. A concussion is an alteration of mental status resulting from the brain being jolted inside of the skull due to a blow to the head or body. Among the many symptoms associated with concussion, headache, dizziness, confusion, amnesia, nausea, and disorientation are commonly reported. Loss of consciousness however, only occurs in less than 10% of all injuries and is not an indicator of concussion severity. Also following the injury the athlete may experience other difficulties such as sensitivity to light and sound, forgetfulness, fatigue and emotional changes such as anxiety or depression.

Most athletes who sustain a concussion can fully recover as long as the brain had time to heal before sustaining another hit; but relying only on an athlete's self-report of symptoms to determine injury recovery is inadequate as many high school athletes are not aware of the signs and symptoms of injury, the severity of concussive injuries pose, or they may feel pressure from coaches, parents, and/or teammates to return to play as quickly as possible. One or more of these factors will likely result in under-diagnosing the injury and a premature return to play. Research has shown that young concussed athletes that return to play too soon, before their brain has healed, are highly vulnerable to more prolonged post-concussion syndrome or, in rare cases a catastrophic neurological injury known as Second Impact Syndrome. Therefore, we encourage the following care when an athlete sustains a concussion in a school-sponsored sporting event.

1. When the concussion occurs, the injured athlete should visit the local hospital emergency room or review their condition with their primary care physician to ensure there is not a need for emergency medical care.
2. Then a care team consisting of the student's primary care physician and parents, along with the athletic trainer, head coach and athletic director should monitor the symptoms of the injury.

Concussion is one of the most complex injuries faced by medical professional as the signs and symptoms are not always straightforward and the effects and severity of the injury can be difficult to determine. The injury occurs in absence of structural changes in brain tissue, generally making traditional neuro-diagnostic tests such as CT, MRI and EEG insensitive. Therefore, we encourage a third step in the concussion care process.

3. Engage the injured athlete in battery of tests that include a combination of self-report symptoms, balance, and neurocognitive testing. The combined assessment will provide a more sensitive and objective evaluation of the effects of the concussion that will help better determine when it is safe for the athlete to return to play.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Classroom Instruction

Hillcrest Elementary School provides child-centered instruction, a stimulating and challenging curriculum, and continuous assessment for every student in all areas of academic learning.

Our instructional philosophy is based on sound principles of child development. Just as children physically develop at different rates, their rates of social and academic development also differ. Some children learn the fundamental skills and concepts quickly, while others need more time. For these reasons, children at our school are often taught in small groups within their own classroom or at times in another room with a support teacher, according to their individual needs. We encourage independent work, in which the learner assumes more responsibility for his/her own learning under the watchful eye of the teacher.

Title 1: Hillcrest Elementary School provides supplemental services in reading under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Funding for these instructional services is provided by the Federal Department of Education through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Academic and Social Curriculum

Hillcrest Elementary School begins the 2018-2019 school year with approximately 160 students in Prekindergarten through First Grade. We strive to create an exciting and rigorous academic program for all students. We also acknowledge the importance of the arts and physical education in a well-rounded education and foster these offerings within our school curriculum. All areas of our curriculum are closely aligned with the Massachusetts State Frameworks and the other schools in the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

Tools of the Mind: Beginning in September 2009, the Gill-Montague Regional School District adopted the Tools of the Mind curriculum for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. This research-based early childhood program is rooted in the teaching of Lev Vygotsky and promotes intentional and self-regulated learning. The Tools of the Mind curriculum encompasses all areas of student learning: reading, writing, comprehension, speaking, mathematics, science, social science, social emotional development. At its core the program provides students with frequent opportunities to practice self-regulation in order to access knowledge. Teachers provide scaffolds (support) to each student's individual level of learning. The skills, in turn, help children to be motivated for learning, build underlying cognitive skills and foundational skills in literacy and mathematics. For more information please visit the website at: www.toolsofthemind.org.

English Language Arts: In first grade, Hillcrest Elementary School uses the researched-based Houghton Mifflin program as the basis for our ELA curriculum. This program includes quality literature to encourage a love of reading. In both kindergarten and first grade, the Foundations curriculum is used to teach phonics. The five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension form the backbone of our reading instruction. Classroom instruction is data-informed; each child's reading progress is monitored through use

of DIBELS Next and other assessments. For writing instruction, we follow the Writing Workshop model using the Lucy Calkins Units of Study. English Language Arts instruction is differentiated and aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Math: In first grade, Hillcrest Elementary School uses the research-based Houghton Mifflin Math Expressions program as the basis for our math curriculum. This curriculum is aligned with the Common Core State Standards: Operations & Algebraic Thinking, Numbers & Operations in Base Ten, Measurement & Data, and Geometry. Fluency with math facts is critical to successful understanding of more advanced mathematical concepts. Responsibility for sufficient math fact practice must be shared between school, student and parents. Classroom instruction is data-informed; each child's progress in math is monitored through ongoing assessment.

Social Studies: In Social Studies, children explore their relationship with others and their environment and the larger world. Children learn tolerance and acceptance by learning about similarity and difference, and through discovering the common roots of culture and customs. Our curriculum is based on the MA frameworks. Content begins with local exploration and progresses with developmental understanding to more national and global concerns. Our youngest children begin with study of their own immediate community: family, classroom, school, and local community. Later, their studies widen to their state, nation, and larger world. As children mature, they become ready to weigh political and historical issues. Students become competent and involved citizens through learning about local, regional and national geography, history, economics, and political systems.

Science: In science, children learn to observe and explore the physical world around them. Students learn to make and test hypotheses through controlled experiments and observations. In accordance with our MA state frameworks, our children study the four strands: earth and space science, life science, physical science, and technology and engineering. Our program is sequential and inquiry based, encouraging students to utilize a variety of approaches in applying the scientific method, including hands-on exploration and observation.

Technology Education: Hillcrest Elementary School students receive weekly lessons offering basic instruction in computer technology. During weekly lessons, students may utilize internet resources and educational apps. Technology tools such as iPads, laptop computers, and interactive whiteboards are also incorporated into classroom instruction as appropriate. *Please see the Acceptable Use of Technology Policy in the APPENDIX of this Handbook.*

Art, Music, and Physical Education: Hillcrest Elementary School students receive weekly lessons in each of these subjects from specialist teachers. Children explore the creative worlds of art and music. In Physical Education, children gain physical fitness skills and develop an appreciation for fair-play and good sportsmanship.

Library: All students have weekly scheduled visits to our school library where they have access to our collection and the opportunity to borrow books. Students are taught library and research skills as appropriate to their grade level. Families and school share responsibility for promoting a love for reading. Parents are asked to read with their children daily and to help their children care for and return library books at the designated time. Books lost or damaged must be paid for

by the student or parent. Parents are also invited to visit our library and are welcome to check out books.

Homework: Homework is important at every grade level, but fulfills different purposes in the primary and upper elementary grades. It is critically important for children to know that their families are interested in their schooling. In all grades we follow the Responsive Classroom approach of modeling and teaching children how to do homework to the high expectations we hold for them. We expect all families to read with their children daily and/or provide quiet time for independent reading.

Homework in Primary Grades (K-2): We make every effort to engage families in their child's learning. Homework is one of many opportunities for family engagement. You can support your child's learning by developing predictable homework routines and talking with your child about his or her daily school experiences

Examples of homework in the primary grades might include:

- Reading with your child daily.
- Playing simple spelling, reading or math games.
- Practicing songs or poems connected to the classroom curriculum.
- Completing math practice pages.
- Practicing reading and/or math skills using educational on-line programs.

Some homework assignments require a family member work directly with their child. Adult-child collaboration is the key ingredient to successful homework for children in kindergarten, first and second grades.

Field Trips: Field trips bring classroom learning to life and are relevant to classroom study. Written parental permission is required in all situations when students leave school grounds. Parent chaperones are often invited to accompany students but they must have a completed CORI prior to any attendance. Field trips are a privilege. By policy of the GMRSD School Committee, any student, who receives two or more notices regarding behavioral issues or any suspensions within 10 school days prior to the trip will be excluded.

Social Curriculum

All elementary schools in the Gill-Montague Regional School District incorporate the practices of Responsive Classroom interwoven throughout the school day. The guiding principles of the *Responsive Classroom* philosophy, summarized as follows, lay the foundation for our school culture.

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn: process and content go hand in hand.
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.

- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn and practice specific social skills. Five particularly important social skills are cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (CARES).
- Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally---is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach.
- How the adults work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Promotion and Retention of Students

The Gill-Montague School Committee has approved the following policy in regard to the retention and promotion of students.

The School Committee is dedicated to the best total and continuous development of each student enrolled. The professional staff is expected to place students at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially, and emotionally.

In evaluating student achievement, each teacher will make use of all available information, including the results of teacher-made tests and other measures of skill and content mastery, standardized test results, and teacher observation of student performance. The principal will direct and aid teachers in their evaluations and review grade assignments in order to ensure uniformity of evaluation standards.

Students normally progress annually from grade to grade. Exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the professional staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the student involved. Exceptions will only be made after prior notification and explanation to the student's parents. The final decision will rest with the building principal.

Teaching & Counseling Interns

Each year, we are happy to welcome teaching and counseling interns from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, as well as other local universities. Teaching and counseling interns work closely with experienced teachers or counselors to complete their training for licensure. It is a collaborative relationship that benefits all involved—students, interns, and staff. We look forward to welcoming this year’s teaching and counseling interns to Hillcrest Elementary School.

School Resource Officer

We are pleased to collaborate with the Montague Police Department to maintain a safe and welcoming school community. This year, a School Resource Officer (SRO) from the Montague Police Department will partner with our schools. The main duties of the school resource officer (SRO) include developing rapport with students and staff, working with school staff to provide preventive help and services to students and families, supporting plans for crisis management, and serving as a contact for support services within and outside the school. The SRO is based in the secondary building but spends time working in each district school.

PARENT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL

At Hillcrest Elementary School we welcome and foster the active participation of parents and other caregivers in the life of our educational community. Parents can participate in a variety of organizations, including the Hillcrest Elementary School Council and Friends of Hillcrest. Parents can also volunteer to help in many ways including: assisting teachers in classroom projects, participating in school-based events, and accompanying classes on field trips. Opportunities for family participation vary by classroom and grade level. Please check in with your child’s teacher for additional information. Volunteering in your child’s school is a great way to build connections in our community.

CORI

Each adult must complete a CORI check prior to volunteering in any capacity that involves contact with students, including accompanying field trips. This entails filling out a CORI request form that parents can obtain from our school main office or the Superintendent’s Office. Parents also need to provide a form of photographic identification such as a driver’s license. All requests are then processed through the Superintendent’s Office. It is important that parents who want to attend field trips submit their CORI request form in a manner that allows time for processing (up to 2 weeks). Parents are encouraged to submit their request at the start of each school year to be covered for any events that may arise.

Volunteer Guidelines

While volunteering, we ask that you follow these guidelines:

- Complete a CORI check before beginning to volunteer.
- Sign in and out at the office.
- Wear a name tag at all times.

- Model respect for the school, school personnel, and school policies at all times.
- Have students address you by using Mr., Ms., Mrs. or Miss and your last name. This is our custom at Hillcrest Elementary and this practice helps to maintain our school culture.
- Use the adult bathroom located next to the main office
- Silence your cell phone while you are volunteering in a classroom or attending a school event.
- We discourage any physical contact with students except in the case of an emergency. If a child is hurt, you may provide assistance and then immediately call for help.
- If a child shares concerning information with you, please alert the classroom teacher or a building administrator.
- Notice the language teachers and staff use with children to encourage their learning and to remind them about school rules. Asking questions that require reflection helps increase student learning. Telling students what you specifically notice about their work reinforces learning much more than phrases like "good job" or "nice work."
- Respect the scheduled timeframe established by the classroom teacher and follow his or her guidance.
- Be only in the appropriate place for designated volunteer activity.
- Model respect for the school, school personnel, and school policies at all times.

Visitors

Keeping schools safe is a primary concern for all schools. As a parent or guardian, you are welcome to visit your child's classroom.* Please, always call ahead to arrange a visit. Sign in at the office and pick up a name tag before proceeding to the classroom. **See Appendix for policies on parent access to specialized programs.*

If you are a "School Choice" visitor or interested in observing at Hillcrest Elementary School for other educational reasons, please call ahead so that we can arrange for you to meet with our principal and visit a number of classrooms. When you arrive at the school, please check in at the main office and get a visitor badge.

As a visitor you need to know...

- To use the adult bathrooms next to the office.
- Every teacher has his/her own way of welcoming visitors in their rooms. Please follow the lead of the teacher.
- Please keep your interaction with the teacher to a minimum so that classroom routines, teaching, and learning are not disturbed.
- Classrooms and children may not be photographed.

Animals in School

Any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to the serious and fatal disease of rabies. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based upon the recommendation of the Massachusetts Department of Health and Education, the following animals are expressly prohibited from Gill School unless an exception is approved, in advance, by the principal.

Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals – Due to high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, foxes, skunks and other wild carnivores, these animals (whether alive or dead) are not permitted in the school building or on the school grounds under any circumstances.

Fur Bearing Animals – Pet dogs, cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets and other fur-bearing animals may pose a risk of transmitting rabies as well as parasites, fleas and other diseases and injuries. As detailed above, this prohibition does not apply to guide, hearing or other service animals or law enforcement animals. These animals are allowed in the school building or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

Bats- Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies and should not be brought in the school building or on school grounds. Bat houses should not be installed on school buildings or school grounds.

Venomous Animals – Spiders, venomous insects, poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited from the school building and school grounds for safety reasons. LEGAL REF.: 28 C.F.R. Part 35.

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Contact information: We must be able to reach you in an emergency. Please complete and return the Student Data Verification sheet which is sent home on the first day of school. Notify the office of any changes that occur during the school year. We need the names and current contact information for people whom you designate to be contacted whenever you are not immediately available for your child in an emergency.

IMPORTANT!

Immediately inform the school office when there are any changes in your contact information, including alternate contacts.

Establishing Good Lines of Communication: Good communication takes effort from both sides. Whenever you have concerns about your child's progress or classroom experience, we urge you to contact your child's teacher first. If you have concerns about your child's broader school experience or have already spoken with your child's teacher and feel an issue has not been resolved, please contact the principal. Ongoing communication resources include our monthly school newsletter, Facebook and our school and district websites. *Please see the School District Communication Guide for more information.*

Open House and Family Events: Children are eager to show off their classroom and introduce their teacher to their parents at Open House. It will take place in early fall and a flyer announcing the date and time will be sent home well in advance. Family nights are held throughout the year and will include many different kinds of fun, educational, and social events. Spending time with your Hillcrest Elementary School family is a good investment in your child's education and always lots of fun. These events are free and everyone is welcome. We hope to see you here.

Class Placement Requests for SY 2019-2020: Decisions regarding class placement are made by the principal in consultation with the teachers at the child's current grade. Parents or guardians who wish to make a request regarding their child's placement should discuss the child's needs with the child's teacher at their spring parent-teacher conference and send a written letter to the principal explaining those needs. *The final deadline for considering any written requests is April 30th.* Please do not ask for teachers by name, but rather describe what you feel is the best teaching style and/or classroom structure for your child. While requests will be given due consideration, they cannot be guaranteed. Numerous factors are taken into account, including learning styles, gender, social balance, and academic need. Creating well-balanced learning communities with highly functioning peer groups is our first priority. Adjustments due to enrollment changes just prior to the opening of school sometimes need to be made to maintain appropriate balance, so class lists are not finalized until the start of the school year. Tentative classroom assignments will be available in August. You can also expect a mailing from the school principal and a welcome letter with a suggested supply list from your child's teacher.

Reporting of Abuse and Neglect

Staff members at Hillcrest Elementary School are *mandated reporters* of child abuse and neglect.

What is abuse & neglect? Abuse can take many forms including physical, verbal, emotional and/or psychological injury. Neglect includes both physical or emotional neglect.

How does abuse or neglect come to our attention? Sometimes a child may display physical evidence of abuse. Other times, a child may disclose that he or she is experiencing abuse while in the care or presence of an adult in his or her life. Sometimes, a child may act out, behave out of character, attend school irregularly, and/or appear unclean and uncared for.

What is our process? When evidence of abuse or neglect comes to the attention of an adult staff member, members of the school's crisis team consult to discuss the child's case. Members of this team include the principal, the school nurse, and the school counselor. A decision is reached regarding whether there is evidence to support filing a 51A petition with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). When filing a 51A the school is not obligated to contact the parents.

ACADEMIC and SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The staff of Hillcrest Elementary School is committed to providing appropriate programming to our students. All children develop in their own unique way and this varying rate of development sometimes results in a child progressing slower or faster than his or her grade-level peers. When concerns arise, there is a process for addressing these issues. Initially, parents are encouraged to share their concerns about their children's academic or social development directly with the classroom teachers. If this does not resolve the concerns, parents can also involve the Principal. In addition, there are more formalized processes for addressing concerns.

Counseling Services

At Hillcrest Elementary School we understand that a child's emotional and social well-being is central to overall healthy development. We provide curriculums that are aimed at developing specific social skills to all students in their classrooms by trained staff. We also offer individual and small group counseling with a trained adjustment counselor for students as the need may arise. Please contact your child's classroom teacher, nurse or the adjustment counselor if you have concerns.

Remedial Reading Services

Students in regular educational programs who need additional support in the acquisition of reading skills can access the support of trained reading specialists. Referrals are made through the regular classroom teachers in consultation with the reading specialists and administration. The level of support varies depending on need and availability of specialists.

Student Support Team

When a teacher is concerned about the progress of a student, he or she can initiate a referral to the building-based Student Support Team. Members of this team may include parents, teachers, principal and/or vice-principal, school nurse, counselor, specialist, and related service providers. SST is a forum that closely monitors a child's progress, identifies the need for additional intervention, develops an intervention plan and evaluates the impact of the plan. At the conclusion of the SST process, unresolved concerns may result in a recommendation for a formal evaluation to determine if a disability exists.

Section 504

In accordance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, students in need of accommodations that enable them to access their educational programs may qualify for a 504 Accommodation Plan. To be protected under Section 504, a student must:

- have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- have a record of such impairment; or
- be regarded as having such an impairment.

Section 504 will help assist them in achieving their educational goals even if they do not need to be in a specialized educational program. If you suspect that your child is eligible for accommodations under Section 504, please direct your referral to the principal of Hillcrest Elementary School.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP)

The Special Education program at Hillcrest Elementary School provides services to students in a variety of placements. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is written for those students in need, based on his/her type of disability and his/her unique strengths and weaknesses. The program is met through a variety of services including but not limited to inclusion interventions, resource room assistance, alternative educational planning, self-contained classrooms, and/or modifications in the regular classroom. Students and parents are afforded rights under federal and state law, IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which was re-authorized in 1997. Questions can be directed to the Student Services Department and/or Principal.

Notice of Rights Pursuant to RSA 186-c:16-B, Statue of limitations for Special Education

State and federal education laws require that school districts offer a "free and appropriate public education" to all children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are defined as children suffering from certain enumerated disabilities who are between the ages of three and twenty-one and who have not yet obtained a high school diploma. A "free and appropriate education" consists of specially designed instruction and educationally related services in accordance with an "individualized education program" developed by the school district in consultation with the student's parents/legal guardians.

If you suspect that your child has a disability and qualifies for such special services, you may make written a referral requesting that the school district determine your child's eligibility. Such referrals should be addressed to Nancy Parlakalus, Director of Student Services

Parents' Access to Specialized Educational Programs

The Gill-Montague Regional School District welcomes parent participation in their student's educational program. Parents are an important member of the TEAM process and need to be involved with their student's education in order to maximize their student's success at school. An amendment to the state special education law (Chapter 363 of the Acts of 2008) requires school districts to provide timely and sufficient access to a child's current or proposed special education program. This access is for parents, or their designees, which include parent-designated independent evaluators and educational consultants.

In order to protect other students' safety and confidentiality and to minimize disruption to the educational process, the following steps must be implemented in order for parents or their designee to observe their child's special education program.

1. Parents must call the building principal to request the observation in advance. Parents should provide the following information: name of person, role, and the purpose of the evaluation. Parents should give at least two possible dates and times for the requested observation.
2. The building principal will notify the Special Education Director of the request for the observation and the proposed dates.
3. The Special Education Director or the Educational Team Chair will contact the parent or designee to schedule the observation on a date which is mutually agreed upon. Factors to consider include the scheduled activity for the program, student needs, and staff availability. The time of observation should not exceed 80 minutes.
4. If parents request that their designee has access to the student's record, the request must be made in writing.
5. The parents or designee must sign a confidentiality document which prohibits them from discussing any student (except their own) whom they may observe in the school. The observer cannot photograph, record, or videotape any aspect of the school, and should keep extraneous materials to a minimum.
6. The Special Education Director or Educational Team Chair will accompany the parent or designee during the observation and will take notes regarding student and staff actions, and will be available to answer the observer's questions.
7. The team may be available for a short period of time to answer questions, as long as this does not disrupt the children's learning.

ASSESSMENT and GRADING POLICY

Teaching staff, students and parents need to receive frequent feedback in regard to the progress that a student is making towards mastery of the curriculum standards. To that end, the Gill-Montague Regional School District engages in a variety of assessment practices. Some practices are formative in nature and are intended to help a teacher and student know what teaching targets to cover on a day-to-day basis. Some practices are summative in nature and are intended to measure a student's performance at the end of a learning sequence.

Report Cards

Reports cards will be distributed three times throughout the year in November, March and June. The June report card will be mailed home after the last day of school.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. These opportunities to meet face-to-face are invaluable, and all parents are strongly encouraged to attend during both sessions. Conferences are held on the half days during two afternoons in November and March and during an evening session in November. Please make all possible efforts to attend the conference. If you must cancel or find a need to reschedule, please contact the teacher as soon as possible.

A SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT Expectations, Rules, and Discipline

We all aspire to an environment that is safe, caring and supportive of every individual in our community. That environment cannot be assumed. That environment is created every day by the way we live together, speak and act towards each other. All rules that we create, and the logical consequences that follow when rules are broken, pertain to our goal of creating an environment that is safe, caring and supportive, and where children experience the joy of learning.

Establishing School Rules

Productive participation in the educational community requires respect, responsibility for our own actions, and willingness to learn from our mistakes. The way we treat each other in our families and at school is the model for how we learn to interact in our lives. Each year, every teacher guides the children in his/her classroom to create a set of rules based on the group's hopes and dreams for the year and the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you wish others to treat you."

Learning self-regulation and the skills of pro-social interaction is a process for young children. We understand that delayed gratification and understanding another's perspective takes time and can present a difficult learning curve. One of the bedrock beliefs of the Responsive Classroom philosophy is that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum and that it must be consistently modeled and actively taught.

Code of Conduct

1. Students must follow established rules and procedures for safety.
 - a. Children must walk in an orderly manner and maintain absolute silence during fire drills.
 - b. Students must always walk to buses in an orderly manner, wait for buses to stop, and wait for adult direction before approaching buses.
 - c. Students must act safely and respectfully on school buses.
 - d. Students must always walk in school hallways and stairways.
 - e. Students must be in appropriate assigned areas in the school building and on the playground.
 - f. Students must only bring to school items that are necessary for school. Students should never bring any weapon or items that could be harmful, dangerous, or unsafe onto school property, onto school buses, or to school events. This includes matches and jackknives. Please note that bringing a weapon or dangerous object to school may lead to immediate suspension, even expulsion. Jewelry that might be considered dangerous, e.g. large rings, neck chains, belt chains, etc., are not allowed. All endangering or illegal items or actions will be responded to in accordance with state or federal laws and with regard to the safety of the school community.
2. Students' physical and verbal interactions toward staff must be safe, kind, and respectful.
3. Students' physical and verbal interactions with other students must be safe, kind, and respectful.
4. Students' actions and words must be respectful of diversity and differences.
5. Students must use peaceful and respectful means to resolve conflicts or disagreements.
6. Students' actions must be fair and inclusive of others.
7. Profanity or obscenity in words, actions, or written material is not acceptable.
8. Students' actions and words must be respectful of the learning environment and the rights of others.
 - a. Students must follow reasonable expectations for behavior in common areas of the school such as the cafeteria, auditorium, and hallways.
 - b. Voice levels must be appropriate for the occasion/area.
 - c. Students must follow established classroom rules/expectations.
 - d. Students must follow adult directions.
9. Students must respect and take appropriate care of school property and the property of others.
10. Students must be honest and truthful.
11. Students must only bring to school items that are necessary for school.
 - a. The following items should not be brought to school: Candy, soda, gum, large amounts of money, cameras, stuffed animals, action figures and other toys, including balls, trading cards, skateboards, electronic toys and items including cell phones, iPods/mp3 players, electronic games, walkie-talkies, laser pens. *Please note that a child may always request to use the office phone. If students need cell phones for use outside of school, a written request explaining the need*

must be given to the principal in advance so that clear expectations for its use and storage can be communicated and appropriate arrangements can be made.

12. Students have a responsibility to attend school regularly and on time.

Clothing and Dress Code

Clothing: Please send your child with adequate clothing to keep him/her warm and dry. Recess is outside whenever possible. Outerwear sufficient to outdoor play is required for all students every day. Children need to wear or bring boots, snow-pants, hats, jackets and gloves/mittens during winter weather. Students will not be permitted to play in the snow if they are not wearing boots and snowpants. When possible, children should also bring indoor shoes for the classroom.

General Dress Code: Monitor the clothing that your children wear to school. It is important to create a learning environment that is comfortable and safe for all. All students are to dress in a manner that does not violate established codes of respect, health and safety. Students are expected to be neat, clean, and orderly in appearance. When a particular form of dress violates our dress code, is deemed offensive, or contributes in any way to the disruption of the school, the student will be asked to change. If the student does not have a change of clothing at school, parents will be called to bring in the proper footwear or garments. The dress code is to be followed at all times including extra-curricular activities (dances, field trips, etc.).

- Students should wear sturdy shoes safe for outdoor play. Footwear must fit securely to the foot for safety on playground and stairs. *High heels, flip-flops and other backless sandals are not permitted.* Slick-soled dress-up shoes are not safe on the playground. Sneakers are ideal for all school days and are **required** on days when students have physical education.
- Please remember that Hillcrest is a Fragrance-Free School. There are members of our school community who are very sensitive to fragrances. In some cases, exposure to fragrances can provoke a **severe allergic reaction** requiring medical attention. Please do not send your child to school wearing scented lotions, scented hair products, perfumes, or body sprays. Also, please be aware that scented laundry products, especially fabric softeners, can also have a negative health impact. Please try to limit your use of these laundry products whenever possible.
- Students are asked to respect the sensibilities of others in the community in their choice of T-shirts with written or symbolic messages. Any clothing with offensive pictures/statements or that promote drugs/alcohol/tobacco will not be permitted.
- Extremely short, loose or tight clothing such that the undergarments or body may be exposed; see-through or transparent clothing should not be worn.
- Hats, hoods and other forms of headgear are not to be worn in the school building at any time (excluding religious reasons). A headband worn on the top of the head to keep hair back is permissible.

Dress for Physical Education: Students usually go outside for the physical education class. Appropriate dress is needed such as a sweatshirt, jacket, snow pants, etc. *Sneakers are required*

for physical education class. Students who are not wearing sneakers may be excluded from P.E. class. Students are asked to remove dangling or dangerous jewelry.

School Discipline Procedures

Any topic that is covered by Massachusetts General Law and outlined in the Hillcrest Elementary School Student Handbook is covered in accordance with Chapter 71: Section 37H and contains policies set by the GMRSD that clearly reinforce and help maintain our adherence to the goals of safety and security.

Our first goal in responding to student misbehavior is safety; our second is education. All of our efforts are directed to three equally important outcomes:

1. Students will understand appropriate school behavior and develop the ability to act respectfully and responsibly in our school environment. This involves learning from mistakes, growing in one's ability to self-regulate and accept logical consequences for inappropriate behavior/actions.
2. All students will feel physically and emotionally safe from harm.
3. The right of all students to an uninterrupted opportunity to learn is respected and maintained. This includes not allowing the disruptive actions of an individual to prevent teaching and learning to proceed in a calm and orderly manner.

Steps to Self-Regulation and Control: Outlined below are the steps taken at Hillcrest Elementary School to help students maintain self-control, or regain it when lost. Please note that in the event that a child's inappropriate behavior becomes chronic, seriously disruptive, or potentially injurious to self, property, or others, we will skip immediately to step 3, 4 or 5.

1. An adult will remind a misbehaving student of the rules and expectations. The student will be given an opportunity to practice the expected behavior. There may be reassignment of seats, project partners or a re-direction of the student's action.
2. If a child continues to disregard a rule or becomes disruptive when reminded of the rules, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. Sensory Break in the classroom (Deep breathing, counting backward from 10, 7 Squeezes, crumpling/tearing paper, Theraputty)
 - b. Take A Break in the Classroom
 - c. Take A Break in a Buddy Classroom
3. If the child is unable to regain control, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. Call for assistance from the building paraprofessional
 - b. Call for assistance from the principal or teacher-in-charge
 - c. Evacuate the classroom & provide supervision to the misbehaving student in the classroom.
4. Logical consequences or loss of privileges, including recess, may be applied for misbehavior that disrupts the learning environment or the order of the school.

5. In extreme cases, when a student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious physical harm to self or others, physical restraint may be used as a last resort. In all cases, the guidelines of 603 CR 46.00 will be followed. Only school staff who are certified in physical restraint may use these procedures.

Protocol for Calm Down Room Use

The Calm Down Room (CDR) is used as a behavioral support of last resort when a student is displaying behaviors which present an unsafe or overly disruptive situation in the classroom. The CDR is used as an exclusionary time-out for students when they are unable to regulate their emotions after all other interventions have proven ineffective. These other interventions include Responsive Classroom techniques, 1-2-3- Magic, Zones of Regulation techniques, and Sensory Supports. The CDR must not be used for the purpose of punishment. See also, *School Discipline Procedures*.

1. When the decision is made to escort a student to the CDR, a staff member should call for assistance via walkie talkie. Whenever possible, two staff members should supervise CDR Use.
2. When a student is escorted to the CDR, a staff member should remain in the CDR.
3. The second staff member should remain outside the Calm Down Room to set a 5 minute timer, to observe the student, and to take notes regarding the student's attitude, posture and speech.
4. While in the CDR, the staff member will offer at least one of the following support strategies to the student:
 - a. Relaxing quietly on the pillows
 - b. Tossing pillows around
 - c. Deep breathing
 - d. Counting backward from 10
 - e. 7 Squeezes
5. If the staff member must leave the CDR to maintain physical safety, he or she must continue to directly supervise the student through the window.
6. After 5 minutes have elapsed, the staff member will check in with the student to assess readiness to return to class. If the student is ready, proceed to Step 7. If the student is unable to regain control after 5 minutes, the staff member will again offer the support strategies listed in Step 4.
7. Once the student has regained control, the staff member will establish a plan for returning to the classroom. The following steps will be taken:
 - a. The student will be reminded of the classroom rules.
 - b. The student will be reminded of strategies for self-regulation.
 - c. The student will be coached in offering an apology of action (verbal apology, repair of classroom materials, steps for completing missed work).
8. Any use of the CDR beyond 20 minutes must immediately be reported to the principal for consultation and review.
9. In some instances, Mobile Crisis Services (413-774-5411) may be called to offer further assistance.
10. A "Report of Calm Down Room Use" must be completed for each use of the CDR and brought to the principal for signature. This report will be sent to the student's family via the home-school folder on the day of Calm Down Room use.

Restraint

In extreme cases, when a student's actions are endangering to themselves, others, and/or school property, physical escort and/or restraint may be necessary. In all cases, the guidelines of 603 CR 46.00 will be followed. The school has personnel who receive yearly training for and are certified in physical restraint. Each incident of restraint is thoroughly documented and communicated to parents and the Superintendent's Office.

Suspensions

In-school or out-of-school suspension may be assigned by the principal or assistant principal in the case of disruptive, potentially harmful, grossly or chronically inappropriate behavior. Removing a student from the academic setting is not taken lightly. Parents will be notified. A re-entry meeting with parents and students may be required before a student returns to the classroom following an out-of-school suspension. The principal/assistant principal must be confident that the child understands the seriousness of the infraction and is ready to resume classroom participation without further incident.

Suspension does not preclude the implementation of other disciplinary consequences. Students may be expected to make up work missed because of suspension so that they do not perceive suspension as merely a day out of school.

A **temporary suspension** is defined as a removal of a student from his/her regular educational program for ten days or less.

A **long-term suspension** is the removal of a student from her/his educational program for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, but no more than forty-five (45) consecutive school days.

Students who are suspended from school will be provided their work in a timely fashion. They will also be provided with extra time to make up this work if it is appropriate. It is the parent(s)/guardian(s) responsibility to pick this work up from the main office.

Any student who is externally suspended, or suspended either cumulatively or consecutively for 10 days from Hillcrest Elementary School has the right to attend a disciplinary hearing with the principal or designee. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student also have the right to attend this hearing. Directly following the hearing they will be provided with a decision verbally, and they will also receive written communication by mail as to the hearing results. If they are not satisfied with the results of the hearing then they have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent of schools.

In-School Suspensions

The Principal may use in-school suspension as an alternative to short-term suspension for disciplinary offenses in accordance with MGL.c.72, section 37H $\frac{3}{4}$. Procedures for in-school suspension are as follows:

- 1) During the in-school suspension, the student has the opportunity to make academic progress.

- 2) The student shall be informed of the disciplinary offense and the basis for the charge, and provided with an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.
- 3) On the same day as the in-school suspension, the principal or designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension or as soon as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two attempts, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts of orally informing the parent.
- 4) Written notice shall be sent to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

DUE PROCESS PROCEDURE

- A student facing temporary suspension shall be given oral or written notice of the charge(s) against him/her.
- The student shall also be given an explanation of the basis for the charge(s) and shall be informed of his/her right to present his/her side.
- The student shall be given an opportunity to explain his/her version of the incident or situation upon which the charge is based.
- Such an opportunity does not require school officials to give the student time to secure counsel, nor for the confrontation and cross-examination of witnesses.

Exceptions

If a student's continued presence in the school hinders the safety, order, or discipline of the academic process, she/he may be immediately ejected. In this case, notice of the suspension must be sent to the parents within 24 hours, and an opportunity to be heard within 72 hours of removal.

CHAPTER 71: SECTION 37H: EXPULSION

Expulsion is the exclusion of a student from school either permanently or for the remainder of the school year. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary:

1. Any student who is found on school premises or at school related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in Chapter 94C, including but not limited to marijuana, cocaine and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.
2. Any student who assaults a principal, dean, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school sponsored or school related events, including athletic games and evening functions, may be subject to expulsion from the school district by the principal.
3. Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (1) or (2) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, a principal may, at his/her discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (1) or (2); provided however, that any principal who decides that said student should be suspended shall state in writing to the school committee his/her reasons for choosing suspension instead of the expulsion as the most appropriate remedy. In this statement, the principal shall represent that, in his/her opinion, the continued presence of this student in the school will not pose a threat to the safety, security and welfare of the other students and staff in the school.
4. Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his/her appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.
5. When students are expelled under the provisions of this section and apply for admission to another school for acceptance, the superintendent for the sending school shall notify the superintendent of the receiving school of the reasons for the pupil's expulsion.

CHAPTER 71, SECTION 37H1/2

“(1) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student’s continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school....”

“(2) Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student’s continued presence in the school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.....”

Upon receiving written notice of a request for an appeal within ten (10) days of the notification of a long term suspension or expulsion, the superintendent shall schedule a hearing at which time the student may be represented by counsel (at the student’s expense) and present oral or written testimony on her/his behalf. The superintendent shall render a written decision in timely fashion to the home of the student. Such ruling will be the final decision of the school district.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS LEADING TO SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION

The following breaches of conduct on school property, school transportation, or at any school-sponsored activity may lead to suspension or expulsion:

1. Willfully striking or assaulting a student or any member of the school staff, or inciting others to behave in this fashion. Hillcrest Elementary School implements a strict “hands off” policy.
2. Theft.
3. The use of obscene or profane language, gestures, graphics or paraphernalia.
4. Deliberate refusal to obey a member of the school staff.
5. Threatening or intimidating school staff or students.
6. Possession of anything that endangers the safety of others.
7. Possession, selling or consumption of tobacco, narcotics, alcoholic beverages, or any controlled substance.
8. The destruction of school property.
9. Any other serious violation of school rules or a series of violations that make the presence of the student a serious impediment to the operation of the school.
10. Violation of local ordinances and/or state and federal statutes.

All suspensions whether internally (ISS) or externally (OSS) served are subject to the discretion of the Administration. In some circumstances Hillcrest Elementary School may refer to the GMRSD Code of Conduct when necessary.

Discipline for Students on Individualized Education Plans or Section 504 Plans

- 1) A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive days or a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days but constitute a pattern are considered to represent a change in placement.
- 2) When a suspension constitutes a change in placement of a student with disabilities, district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team, as determined by the parent and the district, convene within 10 days of the decision to suspend to review all relevant information in the student's file, including the IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information from the parents, to determine whether the behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability or was the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP- "a manifestation determination."
- 3) If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the disability, then the suspension or expulsion may go forward consistent with policies applied to any student without disabilities, except that the district must still offer:
 - a) services to enable the student, although in another setting, to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward IEP goals; and
 - b) as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications, to address the behavior so that it does not recur.
- 4) Interim alternative educational setting. Regardless of the manifestation determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (as determined by the Team) for up to 45 school days.
 - a) on its own authority if the behavior involves weapons or illegal drugs or another controlled substance or the infliction of serious bodily injury on another person while at school or a school function or, considered case by case, unique circumstances; or
 - b) on the authority of a hearing officer if the officer orders the alternative placement after the district provides evidence that the student is "substantially likely" to injure him/herself or others.
 - c) Characteristics. In either case, the interim alternative education setting enables the student to continue in the general curriculum and to continue receiving services identified on the IEP, and provides services to address the problem behavior.
- 5) If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior IS a manifestation of the disability, then the Team completes a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plan if it has not already done so. If a behavioral intervention plan is already in place, the Team reviews it and modifies it, as necessary, to address the behavior. Except when he or she has been placed in an interim alternative educational setting in accordance with part 4, the student returns to the original placement unless the parents and district agree otherwise or the hearing officer orders a new placement.
- 6) Not later than the date of the decision to take disciplinary action, the school district notifies the parents of that decision and provides them with the written notice of procedural safeguards. If the parent chooses to appeal or the school district requests a hearing because it believes that maintaining the student's current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, the student remains in the disciplinary placement, if any, until the decision of the hearing officer or the end of the time period for the disciplinary action, whichever comes first, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

APPEAL PROCESS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Students, parents or guardians disagreeing with a disciplinary decision may make an appeal. However, if a suspension is assigned, the appeal must be made prior to the date of suspension or the suspension must be served. When appealing a disciplinary decision, remember to start with the person who gave the sanction to begin with. To maintain a valid appeal, the following steps must be followed in order. Avoid skipping over people. You will likely be asked to go back and speak directly with the person you skipped. Here is the order to use:

Staff Member (teacher, custodian, guidance counselor, nurse, cafeteria worker, etc.)

Principal

Superintendent

School Committee

1. Speak directly with the person giving the discipline at an agreed upon time. Be prepared to list your reasons for disagreeing with the decision. Explain how the decision may be in violation of the student handbook. Consider offering mediation as an alternative. Sometimes talking things out with a third party can also make relations better for the future.
2. If you have not received satisfactory results and wish to take the issue further, go to the next level. This time put your concerns in writing. Make sure to explain what happened, who was involved, when the incident took place and any other relevant information. Sign your name clearly so the person you are appealing to can get back to you.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION/ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The Gill-Montague Regional School District is committed to maintaining and promoting an educational environment free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law, and the protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to the District. Discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, genetic information or testing, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability (hereinafter “membership in a protected class”) will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any student or other individual who has complained of discrimination, including harassment, or individuals who have cooperated with an investigation of such a complaint, is also unlawful and will not be tolerated. The District will promptly investigate, remedy any harm, seek to prevent recurrence of such conduct, and will also develop procedures to accomplish this end. This policy applies to conduct directed toward persons associated with the educational community by all other persons associated with the educational

community including, but not limited to, students, District employees, the School Committee, school volunteers, and independent contractors.

I. What Is Discrimination, including Harassment?

A. Discrimination: Treating persons differently, or interfering with or preventing them from enjoying the advantages or privileges afforded to others because of their membership in a protected class.

B. Harassment: Oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct relating to a person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit that person's ability to participate in the District's programs or activities by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment.

Harassing conduct based on a person's protected status may include, but is not limited to:

- Degrading, demeaning, insulting, or abusive verbal or written statements;
- Taking personal belongings, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors;
- Drawing or writing graffiti, slogans, visual displays, or symbols on school or another's property;
- Telling degrading or offensive jokes;
- Unwanted physical contact of any kind;
- Physical violence, threats of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or stalking;
- Threatening letters, emails, instant messages, or websites that come within the scope of the District's disciplinary authority;
- Defacing, damaging, or destroying school or another's property.

II. Responsibilities of all Persons Associated with Educational Community

Each member of the educational community is personally responsible for ensuring that his/her conduct does not in any way harass or discriminate against any other person that he/she has contact with in the performance of his/her duties or studies or while acting as a member of the school community. In addition, each member of the educational community is required to fully cooperate in any investigation of alleged discrimination, including harassment. Further, District employees are obligated to intervene and stop any discrimination, including harassment they witness and to immediately report to the appropriate party instances of discrimination, including harassment that are reported to them or of which they otherwise learn.

III. Designated Officials for Addressing Discrimination and Harassment Complaints

The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) are responsible for receiving reports and complaints of violations of this Policy. Individuals may file a report or complaint of discrimination, including harassment, with the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). If the complaint involves allegations of discrimination

based on disability, the person filing the complainant also has the option to file his/her complaint with the building level 504 coordinator. A report or complaint of a violation involving the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should be filed with the Superintendent. A report or complaint of violation involving the Superintendent should be filed with the Committee.

The Civil Rights and Title VI Coordinator:

Conor Driscoll, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls, MA 01376, 413-863-9324,
michael.sullivan@gmrds.org

Title IX Coordinator:

Dianne Ellis, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls, MA 01376, 413-863-9311,
nancy.parlakulas@gmrds.org

Section 504/Title II Coordinator:

Christine Limoges, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls, MA 01376, 413-863-3252,
christine.limoges@gmrds.org

IV. Procedure for Reporting Discrimination and Harassment

The following complaint procedure has been established to ensure prompt and effective investigation into allegations of discrimination, including harassment.

A person who believes that he or she had been discriminated against, including being harassed may, to the extent that they feel comfortable, immediately:

1. confront the harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against him/her;
2. state the conduct that he/she objects to;
3. indicate that he/she finds such conduct offensive, intimidating and/or embarrassing;
4. insist that the person(s) engaging in the conduct stop the conduct immediately; and/or
5. report the conduct immediately to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s);

If the individual with the concern is not comfortable with such a confrontation, or feels that such a confrontation is unsafe and/or otherwise inappropriate, he/she should instead report the situation to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). Reports/complaints are to be filed within ninety (90) days after the conduct complained of occurred or within the time the individual reasonably becomes aware of the conduct. (Note: this filing period may be extended for good cause.) Reports/complaints filed after ninety (90) days will still be accepted, however, it is important to know that the investigation may be impeded due to the passage of time after the conduct or occurrence. The report can be written or oral and should consist of the following:

1. the specific conduct objected to,

2. the date(s) and time(s) such conduct took place,
3. the name(s) of the alleged harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against them,
4. the location(s) where the conduct occurred,
5. the name(s) of any witness(es),
6. action sought to remedy the situation, and
7. any other details or information requested by the designated official.

The individual can contact the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) to file a report/complaint as well as to seek assistance in the filing of a report/complaint. If a report/complaint is filed, the person should provide the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) with any documentation (emails, notes, pictures, etc.) or other information in support of the allegation of discrimination, including harassment.

V. Investigation of Complaints

Upon receipt of a report or complaint, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should conduct a prompt investigation. The investigation must allow for the complainant, the subject of the complaint, the alleged harasser, and any other appropriate party to provide information, including witnesses or other evidence, relevant to the consideration and resolution of the complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will also endeavor to promptly interview and obtain detailed written statements from potential witnesses. If further documentation or information is necessary, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will notify the appropriate party, asking that the information be provided within ten (10) school/working days.

The District will take interim steps, as necessary, to ensure the safety and well-being of the complainant and the alleged harasser while the investigation is being conducted. Interim measures are available even if the complainant does not file or continue to pursue a complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) shall notify the complainant of specific types of interim measures available, which may include measures to avoid contact with the alleged harasser, allowing employees to change work situations as appropriate, or prohibiting an alleged harasser from having any contact with the complainant pending the results of the District's investigation. At any time, a complainant may request either orally or in writing to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) that specific interim measures be taken pending the outcome of the investigation.

A written determination regarding the complaint and any resolution will be provided by the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) to the complainant within thirty (30) school/working days of the complaint. The determination of whether the District's antidiscrimination policy has been violated will be based upon a preponderance of the evidence standard.

The complainant may request reconsideration of the determination and/or resolution of a complaint by notifying the Superintendent in writing or verbally within seven (7) school/working

days of receipt of the written determination of the Civil Rights Coordinators. The Superintendent or his/her designee will respond to such request within (30) thirty school/working days of receipt of the request for reconsideration; his/her decision is final.

If a violation is found to have occurred, the District will take steps to prevent recurrence of the violation and correct its discriminatory effect on the person(s) affected. Such steps may include appropriate disciplinary action, counseling, development of a safety plan and other remedies, as appropriate.

VI. Consequences of Violating Policy - Discipline & Discharge

Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the contractual provisions governing his/her employment. In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which may range from detention, suspension from schools, or expulsion from school. (Note: students with disabilities will be subject to the applicable disciplinary procedures set forth in the Students' Rights and Responsibilities District handbook, which adhere to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973.) In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

VII. Confidentiality

Investigations of discrimination, including harassment complaints shall be conducted in such a manner as to disclose information only to those with a need to know or those who may have information pertinent to the investigation. Please note, some level of disclosure may be necessary in the course of conducting interviews in connection with investigation of any complaint under this policy. The District shall endeavor to keep such information as confidential as it can without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

VIII. State and Federal Authorities

In addition to the process described above, the complainant may, at any time, file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or other appropriate federal or state agency charged with enforcement of state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, including harassment based on membership in a protected class.

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
5 Post Office Square
8th Floor, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02109-3921
Telephone: (617) 289-0111 <http://www.ed.gov>

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
436 Dwight St., 2nd Floor, Rm. 220
Springfield, MA 01103
Telephone: (413) 739-2145

Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148-4906
Telephone: (781) 338-3000

Legal References: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended 45
Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission
Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq. (Title IX)
Board of Education 603 CMR 26:00

Bullying, Harassment, Hazing

It is the policy of the Gill-Montague Regional School District to provide a learning and working atmosphere for students, employees and visitors free from sexual harassment, bullying, hazing, and intimidation. These terms are referenced herein as "harassment". Such action may occur on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability, or for any other reason.

Reports of **cyberbullying** by electronic or other means, occurring in or out of school will be reviewed and, when a nexus to work or school exists, will result in discipline. Parents of students alleged to have engaged in cyber harassment will be invited to attend a meeting at which the activity, words or images subject to the complaint will be reviewed. A student disciplined for **cyberbullying** will not be re-admitted to the regular school program until his or her parent(s) attend such meeting.

It is the responsibility of every employee, student and parent to recognize acts of harassment and take every action necessary to ensure that the applicable policies and procedures of this school district are implemented. Any employee or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment has the right to file a complaint and to receive prompt and appropriate handling of the complaint. Further, all reasonable efforts shall be made to maintain the confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties, but proper enforcement of this policy may require disclosure of any or all information received.

Definitions

Bullying and Cyberbullying means the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extra-curricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: Causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property. Places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Sexual Harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other inappropriate verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including but not limited to unwelcome comments, touching, written notes, pictures/cartoons or other inappropriate conduct, such as leering, whistling, brushing up against the body, commenting on sexual activity or body parts or other activity referred to by the Model MCAD policy prohibiting such behavior. Harassment has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or learning environment.

Hazing means any conduct or method of initiation, even if consented to, into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person.

GMRSD Bullying Policy and Procedures

Reporting by Staff

School officials and employees are required to report any suspected incidents of bullying as required by M.G.L. c.71, §37O(e). Staff members are to report any suspected acts of bullying to their building administrator, who in turn is responsible for conducting an investigation and notifying the Superintendent of Schools. Reports may also be made directly to the Superintendent of Schools if appropriate or desired.

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents, Guardians or Others

The Gill-Montague Regional School District expects students, parents or guardians, or others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, ***but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.*** Students, parents or guardians, or others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. The district's bullying report form is found in Appendix B. Students will be provided practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

At the elementary level, students will be encouraged to discuss incidents of bullying with their classroom teachers, adjustment counselors, a trusted adult staff member, or with the principal or designee. Oral reports will be reduced to writing by the adult listener as necessary.

At the middle and high school levels, students will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying through all means available, including the online reporting form found on the district website as well as the Safety Tip Line. Students will be encouraged to reach out to a trusted teacher or other adult staff member, a guidance counselor, or the principal or designee.

Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

We pledge to take each alleged incident of bullying seriously and will conduct a thorough investigation following the same process and procedure for all reported incidents in the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

Disciplinary action taken will be consistent with the policies and guidelines established by the Gill-Montague Regional School District as indicated by district policy and student/staff handbooks. Parents, students, staff and community members need to be aware, however, that disciplinary action will not be taken against any alleged aggressor based *solely* on an anonymous report.

Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

The principal or designee will make an immediate assessment regarding the safety of all individual students involved. If the incident reported involves off-campus bullying or cyberbullying, a determination will be made if there is an immediate threat to any students involved. If there is a positive determination, a report will be made immediately to the Gill Police Department. Further actions will be coordinated with our School Liaison.

If the incident involves on-campus bullying or cyberbullying, a determination will be made if there is an immediate threat of violence to any students involved. If there is a positive determination, a report will be made immediately to the Montague Police Department. Further actions will be coordinated with our School Liaison.

After the determination that an act of bullying or retaliation has occurred and after appropriate discipline has been enforced, the principal or designee will develop a Safety/Conduct Plan with the students involved. The parents or guardians will be involved in the development of the plan. Teachers and other appropriate staff members will be notified of the incident, the parties involved, and their roles in the incident along with the provisions of the Safety/Conduct Plan.

Obligations to Notify Others

Notice to Parents or Guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00, and will occur in writing either through email or written letter as well as via telephone. Every effort will be made to contact the parent or guardian in person, so it is imperative that parents or guardians maintain up-to-date contact information with the school district.

Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00

Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the Montague Police Department. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements between the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Montague Police Department. Also, if the incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the Montague Police Department if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the School Liaison assigned by the Montague Police Department and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

Investigation

The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process.

Often parents wish to know exactly what will happen to an aggressor during the investigation and/or disciplinary phase, and this is a natural reaction. However, educators in the United States must obey the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This act strongly affects schools and disciplinary procedures against minor age students. One effect is this act is to make school records (including disciplinary records) a private matter. This means that the school district is *prohibited* from sharing any information in a student's record – including disciplinary information – to third parties without parental consent.

Massachusetts General Law similarly prohibits the dissemination of any student record information to third parties without parental consent (MGL 603 CMR 23.07[4]). The result of this is that school officials may not divulge how they have disciplined a student, even the parents of the target in the incident. School officials must obey state and federal laws which mandate that they keep student records confidential and private.

The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation [see Appendix B].

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations, and have been outlined on the Bullying Incident Reporting Form [see Appendix B].

Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: (i) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and (ii) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations (FERPA and M.G.L. 603 CMR 23.07). Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian

regarding the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a “stay away” order or other directive that the target must be made aware of in order to report violations.

Incident Reporting form attached.

*please also see gmrsd.org or any school office for a harassment/bullying/civil rights violation reporting form.

LEGAL REFERENCES

1. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 703
2. Title IX of the 1972 U.S. Civil Rights Act.
3. Chapter 151 C, Massachusetts General Laws
4. M.G.L. Chapter 76 § 5
5. M.G.L. Chapter 269 § 17, 18, 19
6. M.G.L. Chapter 71, §§82, 84

First Reading: March 9, 2010

Voted and Adopted: March 23, 2010

APPENDIX A

ASBESTOS NOTIFICATION

This notification is required by the –
ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT-
(AHERA, 40 CFR Part 763 of Title II of the Toxic Substances Control Act)

Asbestos management plan documents are available and accessible to the staff and public at each individual school site of the district and Central Office (Facility/Energy Manager Office).

The high school/middle school no longer has a requirement for the asbestos plan due to the abatement done during the 2005 renovation.

You may contact the Principal at each school to view the document.

APPENDIX B
GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Bullying **Sexual Harassment (Title IX Violation)** **Civil Rights Violation**

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. Check whether you are the: **Target of the behavior** **Reporter (not the target)**

3. Check whether you are a: **Student** **Staff member (specify role)**

Parent **Administrator** **Other (specify)**

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

4. If student, state your school: _____ **Grade:** _____

5. If staff member, state your school or work site: _____

6. Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (s) (of behavior):

Name of Aggressor (s) (Person (s) who engaged in the behavior):

Date(s) of Incident(s):

Time When Incident(s) Occurred:

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible):

7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please attach additional pages if necessary.

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ **Date:** _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY – TECHNOLOGY

The Gill-Montague Regional School District shall provide access for employees and students to the system/network, including access to external networks, for limited educational purposes. *Educational purposes* shall be defined as classroom activities, career and professional development, and high quality self- discovery activities of an educational nature. The purpose of the system/network is to assist in preparing students for success in life and work by providing access to a wide range of information and the ability to communicate with others. The system/network will be used to increase communication (staff, parent, and student), enhance productivity, and assist staff in upgrading existing skills and acquiring new skills through a broader exchange of information. The system/network will also be utilized to provide information to the community, including parents, governmental agencies, and businesses.

Availability

The Superintendent or designee shall implement, monitor, and evaluate the district's system/network for instructional and administrative purposes.

Access to the system/network, including external networks, shall be made available to employees and students for instructional and administrative purposes and in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures.

Access to the system/network is a privilege, not a right. All users shall be required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of all administrative regulations and procedures governing use of the system and shall agree in writing to comply with such regulations and procedures. Noncompliance with applicable regulations and procedures may result in suspension or termination of user privileges and other disciplinary actions consistent with the policies of the Gill-Montague Regional School District. Violations of law may result in criminal prosecution as well as disciplinary action by the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

Acceptable Use

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement administrative regulations, procedures, and user agreements, consistent with the purposes and mission of the Gill-Montague Regional School District as well as with law and policy governing copyright.

Monitored Use

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of electronic resources by students and employees shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure appropriate use for instructional and administrative purposes.

Liability

The Gill-Montague Regional School District shall not be liable for users' inappropriate use of electronic resources or violations of copyright restrictions, users' mistakes or negligence, or costs incurred by users. The Gill-Montague Regional School District shall not be responsible for ensuring the accuracy or usability of any information found on external networks.
