



PreSchool/School Readiness Student/Parent Handbook 2019-2020

These are the rules, regulations, and policies of our PreSchool/School Readiness Program. The purpose of this handbook is to cooperatively work with students and their parents in their efforts to make a smooth transition to Full Day Kindergarten and their future years in our school system.

Voluntown Elementary School Voluntown Public School System Voluntown, Connecticut

Reminder:

Morning session is from 8:50AM to 11:25AM

Afternoon session is from 12:45PM to 3:20PM

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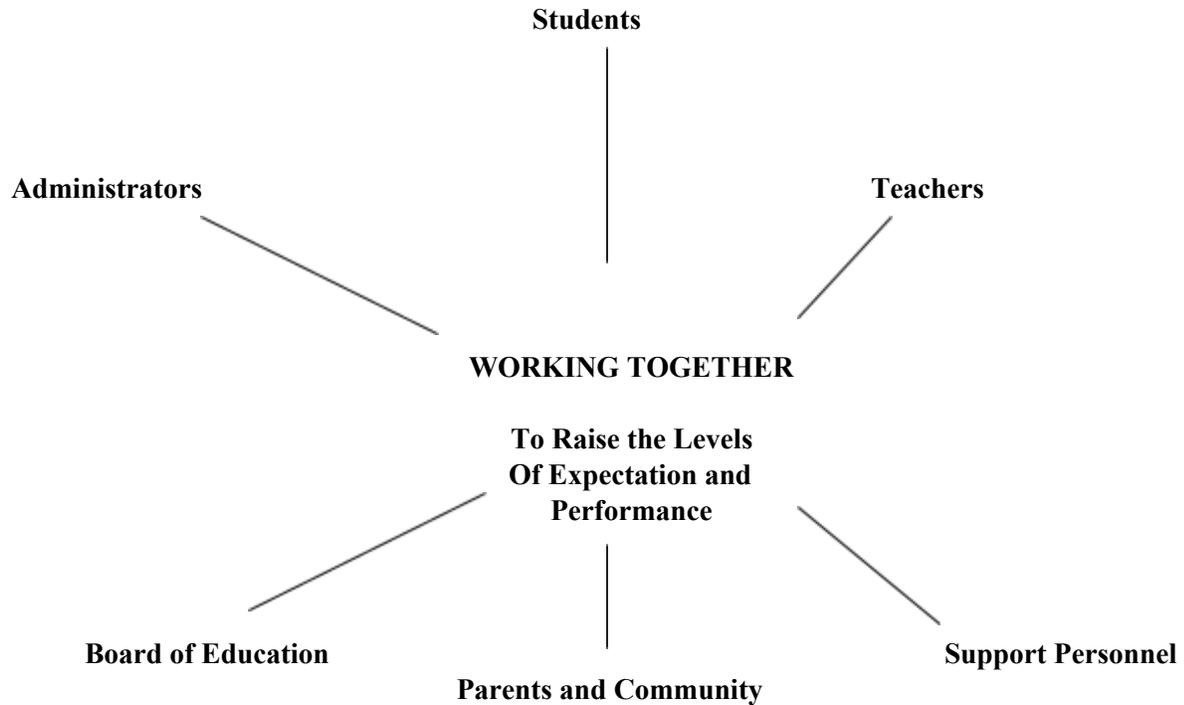
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**Voluntown Public School System
Voluntown, Connecticut**



NAME

ADDRESS

TEACHER

*****Steps in Communication*****

Channels of communication have been established by the Board of Education and, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, concerns of parents or residents should be made in the following sequence:

TEACHER → BUILDING ADMINISTRATION → SUPERINTENDENT

Members of the Board will refer individuals to the Superintendent of Schools, (860) 376-9167.

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School Readiness Council

Voluntown has an Early Childhood School Readiness Council consisting of members from the school, town and parents. This Council meets regularly and helps serve as a parent advisory council and assists with decision-making process for the School Readiness Program. The council also oversees and recognizes the collaboration between Kindergarten Programs and the Preschool/School Readiness Programs. Orientation, collaboration and transition activities are held throughout the school year as the classrooms are all located in the same hallway.

School Readiness Program Philosophy

The early years are a time of tremendous learning and growth. At Voluntown Elementary School, we believe that all children are competent learners and capable of positive outcomes. The success of every child is important to us. Our goal is to provide a preschool/school readiness program for students that supports learning in all developmental domains (personal/social, physical, creative, and cognitive) in an environment that is appropriate to the developmental needs of young children. This includes providing support and services to children and families to ensure that all children can reach their potential and be successful in the school community.

Goal of the School Readiness Program

To give children a strong sense of self worth and confidence, instilling an appreciation of themselves and others, and an eagerness to learn.

Objectives of the School Readiness Program

1. Children will become familiar with everyday phenomena in first-hand and sensory ways.
 - Encourage multi-sensory experiences and exploration in order to develop gross and fine motor skills utilizing such mediums such as but not limited to:
 - Paint
 - Sand
 - Water
 - Musical Instruments
 - Field Trips
 - Visitors
2. Children will enhance their self-concept through group activities and learning experiences.
 - Develop independence, confidence, and ability to manage own environment.
 - Clarify and express feeling and sense of self through dramatic play, dance, creative art, music, and circle time.
3. Children will begin to recognize and communicate ideas with pictures and symbols as well as spoken words.
 - Recognize and name numbers, colors, shapes, spatial relationships (size, height, weight), letters, letter-sounds and books
4. Children will begin to initiate, ask questions, and think for themselves.
 - Combine information to arrive at new conclusions.
 - Enjoy satisfaction of learning skills
 - Practice problem solving skills: observing details, making comparisons, classifying, placing things in sequence, understanding cause and effect, predicting outcomes.
 - Experience decision making by making informed choices.

Language Acquisition Philosophy

The Voluntown School Readiness Program's philosophy for the acquisition of language for English speaking student as well as EL students focuses on immersion in language. Young children develop language competence through exposure. Teachers focus on activities that support language development such as:

1. An organized classroom environment with clear established routines that promote a feeling of belonging and comfort.
2. Pictures that reinforce vocabulary development.

3. A variety of toys that develop competency in skills, other than language and are not communicatively demanding.

Language techniques include:

1. Nonverbal communication
2. Simple language (short direct phrases)
3. Emphasis on important words
4. Combining gestures and words
5. Repeating key words
6. Repetition of songs that include gestures and movement
7. The use of Picture books with predictable stories

Language acquisition will take into consideration families in the program as well as the community we live in. Vocabulary development will focus on words that children will see and use in their daily lives at home or at school. When meetings are held with parents, who speak a language other than English, a translator will be provided.

Voluntown Elementary School Philosophy

It is the philosophy of Voluntown Elementary School to promote a positive atmosphere to help students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Our entire staff is dedicated to providing all students with a productive and enjoyable environment and encourages all students and parents to become allies in this endeavor as they complete graduation requirements and make the transition from elementary to junior high and junior high to high school.

Our school has its share of rules and regulations, designed not to limit freedoms, but rather to ensure the rights and opportunities of both students and staff alike. This handbook is intended to enable students and parents to better understand our course of studies, our expectations for student conduct, and, in general, our entire curricular and co-curricular programming.

Voluntown Elementary School Mission and Expectations Statement

Recognizing that our ultimate goal is to prepare students who will be responsible citizens of a democratic, culturally diverse society, our mission is to educate the whole student, encourage the pursuit of excellence, and foster an enduring love of learning. Our mission is based on the following beliefs:

- All students need to be valued and respected.
- All students are at a unique developmental stage and require a safe and nurturing learning environment appropriate to their particular emotional and cognitive needs.
- A comprehensive academic program must recognize the individual needs, interests, and learning styles of all students.
- An optimal curriculum addresses all facets of literacy and benchmark standards, teaching basic skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills in a variety of disciplines.
- A cooperative relationship with parents and community is vital in the education of children.

Expectations – students will leave school as:

- Tolerant and considerate individuals
- Clear communicators
- Logical thinkers
- Creative problem-solvers
- Collaborative contributors
- Enthusiastic learners

They are encouraged to further develop the core values of respect, responsibility, safety, and pride.

History of the Voluntown Schools

Between 1696 and 1732, there were no formal schools in Voluntown. Though town government was officially organized in 1721, it was several years before a circulating school was organized and a schoolmaster hired at the town's expense. In 1735, it was ordered that the school be kept in four places, three months in a place. The master, John Dunlap, was given thirty pounds (money) and enough meat, drink, washing and lodging for keeping the schools open for eleven months and eighteen days.

The first schoolhouse in town was built in 1737, four rods from the northwest corner of the Line Meeting House. In 1766, there were thirteen official school districts in Voluntown, each under the supervision of a "grand-school committee-man" appointed by the town. Wylie School was one of those small schools. Throughout

the years, the small school districts slowly combined and eventually all students came to Center School, which was located on the present school site.

In 1953, the original Voluntown Elementary School was dedicated. Through the years, more rooms were added until the most current renovations were made that brought the school to its present size and Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth grade configuration.

Voluntown Board of Education/School Readiness Council Mission Statement

The Voluntown Board of Education commits to providing our students the basic skills essential to competent functioning in our society; including the ability to read, write, listen, speak, manipulate basic math concepts and acquire a general knowledge of science. It is therefore our mission to help our students mature into independent, reasoning, and responsible individuals, who can adapt constructively in an ever-changing multi-cultural and technological world.

The mission of the Voluntown Board of Education is to provide all of its students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to learn, as well as to contribute and participate in a culturally diverse, rapidly changing society and to live a productive life. By working in concert with the family and community, an educational partnership will assist all children in achieving these skills and knowledge.

We will work to ensure all children will reach their individual potential with an appreciation of the lifelong learning process. We support the premise that learning is challenging, rewarding, and fun. We encourage teachers to provide opportunities for participation in the democratic process and the development of democratic values and ideas. We encourage family and community involvement in support of our school.

Important Telephone Numbers

Voluntown Elementary School ...	860/376-2325 (8:00 AM--4:00 PM)
Superintendent's Office	860/376-9167
Special Education Department...	860/376-4720

Absences/Attendance:

Every year, at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, we must inform parent/guardian(s), in writing, of his or her obligations under section 10-184 of the Connecticut General Statutes (see below).

Sec. 10-184. Duties of parents, School attendance age requirements.

All parents and those who have the care of children shall bring them up in some lawful and honest employment and instruct them or cause them to be instructed in reading, writing, spelling, English grammar, geography, arithmetic and United States history and in citizenship, including a study of the town, state and federal governments. Subject to the provisions of this section and section 10-15c, each parent or other person having control of a child five years of age and over and under eighteen years of age shall cause such child to attend a public school regularly during the hours and terms the public school in the district in which such child resides is in session, unless the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the public schools. The parent or person having control of a child five years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is six years of age and the parent or person having control of a child six years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is seven years of age. The parent or person shall exercise such option by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. The school district shall provide the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities available in the school system.

Absences:

When a student is absent, a parent or guardian MUST inform the school regarding the absence by either calling the school or sending an email/written note. This documentation is required within 10 days of the absence or the absence will be marked unexcused. The school will make every effort to contact home whenever a student is absent.

When any student has been ill or expects to be absent due to illness for three days or more, he/she may obtain assignments by telephoning the school office before 8:50AM. These assignments can be picked up at the end of the school day after 3:20PM. Teachers are not required to provide special work for students who will be absent for reasons such as a family vacation. Students missing more than half the instructional day for the purpose of travel or vacation are considered as “absent”.

Teachers may use WIN to review missed concepts to the student upon their return. However, teachers are not obligated to provide extra help or tutoring outside of the school day. If tutoring is necessary, the cost would be the responsibility of the parent. Effective July 1, 2017, any student serving an in-school suspension is to be counted as “in-attendance”.

Makeup Work due to an Absence:

Students are responsible for making up any missed work from an absence. If a student is absent from school, work that is already due must be turned in upon his/her return. If a student is absent from school on a day of a test/quiz, it is expected that he/she will take it on the day of their return. Our teachers will provide him/her with a copy of all missing assignments on the day of their return. At that time, the teacher will create a makeup work plan for the student, based on the subject, instructional objectives, and type of assignment, not to exceed 5 days after returning to school.

Excused and Unexcused Absences:

Voluntown Elementary School follows the Connecticut State Board of Education’s Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences. Please use the chart below to help explain what are acceptable reasons for a student absence to be considered excused, as well as the required documentation that must be reported to the school (within 10 days of a student absence).

Total # of Days Absent	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to Be Considered Excused	Documentation Required within 10 days
One through nine	Any reason that the student’s parent or guardian approves.	Parent or guardian note/email/phone call.
10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Illness (Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absences, regardless of the absences length. ● Student’s observance of a religious holiday. ● Death in a student’s family or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family. ● Mandated court appearance (additional documentation required). ● The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (parental documentation is not required for this reason). ● Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators (opportunities must meet certain criteria). 	Parent or guardian note/email/phone call and in some cases additional documentation (see details of specific reason). Note/Email/Phone Call message must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Date of absence ● Reason for absence ● Name/signature of parent/guardian reporting the absence

Excused Absences for Children of Service Members:

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has an immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone, or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Board of Education, additional excused absences to visit such child’s parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian.

Attendance Requirements:

In order to take full advantage of all that school has to offer, students need to make every effort to be in school each day. Good attendance is a major contributor to academic success. We work closely with the home to

monitor student attendance. Classroom learning experiences are essential components of the overall educational process. Prompt and regular attendance to school and to individual classes is a valid and reasonable requirement to promote academic success.

In order to be promoted to the next grade level, the following requirements must be met:

- PreSchool/School Readiness: A student must meet all Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS).
- Elementary (Kindergarten – 4th grade): A student must meet all grade level expectations.
- JHS (5th – 8th grade): A student must receive a passing grade in each subject area (65% or better).
- A student may not be absent from school for more than eighteen (18) days in one school year. A student with extenuating circumstances may appeal to the Superintendent of Schools.
- Any student who is absent six (6) days, his/her parents or guardian will receive an informal notice.
- Any student who is absent nine (9) days will be notified of State attendance policies by the school administration. His/her parent or guardian will receive a formal written letter.
- Any student who is absent sixteen (16) days within a school year, a conference will be called with the student, parent/guardian(s), teacher(s), school counselor and an administrator to develop an individual attendance plan for the student to ensure daily attendance.
- Any student who has been deemed “truant” and/or “habitually truant” during the school year, a conference will be called (no later than 10 days after they have been deemed “truant” and/or “habitually truant”, with the student, parent/guardian(s), teacher(s), school counselor and an administrator to develop an individual attendance plan for the student to ensure daily attendance. A referral will be made to community agencies providing student and family services.

Chronically Absent Definition:

- **Chronically absent:** an enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal or greater than ten (10) percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during the school year.

Truancy Definitions:

- **Truant-** according to C.G.S. section 10-198a a “truant” is a student age five to eighteen who has four (4) unexcused absences in a month (period of time, not specific months named in a calendar) or ten (10) unexcused absences in one school year.
- **Habitual Truant-** according to C.G.S. section 10-198a a “habitual truant” is a student age five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has twenty unexcused absences.
- **Defiant-** a student who has been continuously overtly defiant of school rules.

Attendance: TARDINESS (Reminder – School Starts at 8:50AM)

The School System provides daily bus transportation for students. Students who do not use this transportation are still expected to arrive at school on time, ready to participate and learn. They are expected to plan their time effectively to arrive at school and classes in a timely manner.

A student who is not present in homeroom for attendance at 8:50AM and prepared to start academic classes is considered tardy. Any time a student is tardy, they must sign in at the main office.

One of the most valuable life skills a student can learn is taking the responsibility of arriving at school everyday on time. This skill can easily be accomplished and will transfer as a valuable asset for the future. One of the most important times of the school day is in the morning. This is the time when important school news is announced, teachers define the plans for the day, and instructional goals are reviewed and set. The whole tone of a child’s school day is set in the first part of the day. Being punctual is ESSENTIAL, as it minimizes disruption to the learning environment and maximizes valuable instructional time. Please help support your children in learning habits that will help them be successful at school and throughout life.

Please note that excessive accumulated time from being tardy and/or dismissed early from school, may be calculated in determining the total number of instructional time lost.

An excused tardy includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Illness
- Doctor’s appointment
- Extreme family emergency
- Extreme inclement weather

An unexcused tardy includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Oversleeping (parent or child)
- Alarm did not go off
- Missed Bus

- Sleeping in

Animals in the Classroom

1. Classroom pets or visiting animals must appear to be in good health.
2. Pets or visiting animals must have documentation from the veterinarian or an animal shelter to say they are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) the notice must also state that the animal is suitable for being in contact with children.
3. Teaching staff will supervise at all times and offer instruction to children on proper behavior when in close proximity to animals.
4. Program staff will ensure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal.
5. Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk of salmonella infection.
6. Hands will be washed after children or staff handles an animal.

Arrival Procedures (Effective as of November 2014)

When dropping off your child(ren) in the morning at school, please enter the lower parking lot (first lot to the left) to the drop off point/crosswalk. Students will exit the vehicle and be safely monitored using the crosswalk to enter the building by our staff member(s) on morning bus duty.

When dropping off your PreSchool child(ren) in the morning/afternoon at school, please walk him/her to the staff member at the Early Childhood door. We thank you for accompanying your child to the Early Childhood door for their safety. Please park in the Early Childhood parking lot (the right parking lot when you enter VES).

Buses are the only vehicles that are allowed to pull up to the front of the building between the hours of 8:15-9:00AM and 3:00-3:45PM.

Thank you for your adherence to our student arrival procedures. This will help alleviate the traffic backup on Route 138 and ensure that our students, staff, and visitors to VES are safe!

Asbestos

Legislation requires all school buildings to be reevaluated to determine if asbestos is present and if it poses a significant health hazard to the building's occupants. The District has on file with Mr. Paul Ricard, our Director of Maintenance, plans showing the location of asbestos in each building and measures undertaken to comply with regulations to maintain a safe school environment. Request to review these plans may be made in the school office.

Assemblies

Each year a variety of assemblies are held. Students are to sit with their class and conduct themselves in a polite and courteous manner. Past assemblies have included such topics as birds of prey, substance abuse, cultural presentations, student resiliency, self-esteem and others.

Birthday Treats

Due to the many food allergies, including those that are life-threatening, as well as the Connecticut State Department of Education's Nutritional Standards, we can no longer allow birthday treats to be brought to school for distribution to the whole class. An alternative to a birthday treat might be stickers, or pencils, or a book for the class or school library with a bookplate honoring your child's special day. If teachers do request snacks, they will be very specific about the ingredients. All food brought to the class must include a list of the ingredients and be approved by an administrative review. Please see the Voluntown Public Schools Wellness Policy #6142.101 posted on our web site at [volutownct.org](http://www.volutownct.org), as well as the Connecticut State Department of Education's website, <http://www.sde.ct.gov>, to view the list of approved food and beverages.

Party Invitations to Classmates

We allow the distribution of invitations **only if ALL classmates are invited.**

Peanut Free Classrooms

Sometimes classrooms and other areas are designated as "nut free" due to severe nut allergies of students. If your child is in a "nut free" classroom, a notification will be sent home and students will not be allowed to bring food containing nuts in the classroom at anytime.

Board of Education

The Voluntown Board of Education responsibilities and duties are defined in Section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes. These responsibilities, in part, include care, maintenance, operation of school

property, transportation, budgeting, employment of personnel, program and curriculum approval. The members of the Board of Education are:

Chairperson	Diana M. Ingraham
Vice-Chairperson	Kristen Trahan
Secretary	Barbara Gileau
Members	Kate Beuparlant Flo Harmon Skart Paul Christopher Wilson
Superintendent of Schools	Adam S. Burrows

In order to perform its duties in an open and public manner and in accordance with state law, the Voluntown Board of Education holds regular business meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Superintendent's Office. Parents, students and other community members are encouraged to attend.

Board of Education meetings follow a planned and posted agenda. At a certain time in the agenda the Board chairperson will recognize individuals who want to make a statement, not more than 5 minutes in length, or to express a viewpoint. In addition, if they give advance notice to the Superintendent, individuals with relevant issues for discussion may have such issues placed on a future Board agenda for a more thorough discussion of the topic.

The Board's main purpose is policy setting designed to improve student learning. Board members are interested in the public's opinion on district issues, which can assist them in formulating policy that reflects community values and expectations. The Board gathers community input to maintain a strategic plan.

Budget

A School Readiness Grant pays for the costs of the program. The State Department of Education Office of Early Childhood establish the criteria for this budget after it has been approved by our local School Readiness Council. See School Readiness Council (page 17) to review guidelines for administering the School Readiness Grant.

Bullying Policy (Safe School Climate Plan)

Bullying of a student by another student is prohibited. Such behavior is defined as any overt acts by a student or groups of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity, which acts are repeated against the same student over time. Such behavior will result in disciplinary action. Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical violence and attacks.
2. Verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs including ethnic-based or gender-based put-downs.
3. Threats and intimidation.
4. Extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions.
5. Exclusion from peer groups within schools.

Three Main Components of anti-bullying initiatives:

School Wide Level

1. Increased understanding about and awareness of the characteristics of bullies and victims. This step targets the entire school population, teachers, staff, and students.
2. Increased commitment of staff to maintaining a safe, and secure school climate.
3. Increased supervision of unstructured time (recess, lunch) is an important aspect of the school wide plan.
4. An ongoing training program includes such components as:
 - Staff development
 - School wide survey or questionnaire for 3rd through 8th grades
 - PTA programs about bullying
 - Purchase of videos for discussion
 - General school assembly
 - Announcements about kindness, respect, cooperation, gentleness, and others

Classroom Level

There are specific classroom rules about bullying such as:

- We shall not bully other students.
- We shall help students who are bullied.

- We shall make a point to include students who become easily left out.

There are class meetings for discussing the rules, reviewing sanctions or consequences for undesirable behavior. And the use of praise in class meetings, cooperative learning groups, and other strategies that seek to develop an increase in positive classroom climate

Individual Level

There are clear consequences in place that include:

- Serious talks with both bully and victim by classroom teacher.
- Parent contact.
- Peer mediation/conflict resolution program.
- Referral to office if behavior continues.

Bullying Notice (Annual State Requirement for Board of Education Policy #5131.911)

Bullying behavior by any student in the Voluntown Public Schools is strictly prohibited, and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from school. “Bullying” means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- Creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- Infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, verbal or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or physical, mental, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Students who engage in any act of bullying, on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education, and outside of the school setting if such bullying:

- Creates a hostile environment at school for the victim,
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or
- Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- Students are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials.

Students and/or parents may file verbal or written complaints concerning suspected bullying behavior, and students shall be permitted to anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees. Any report of suspected bullying behavior will be promptly reviewed. If acts of bullying are verified, prompt disciplinary action may be taken against the perpetrator, consistent with his/her rights of due process. Board policy and regulation #5131.911 set forth this prohibition and the related procedures in detail, and are available to students and their parents/guardians upon request.

Bus Safety, Discipline and School Transportation

The bus driver is in charge of the bus and its occupants from the time the students get on the bus until they are safely discharged. Students are expected to respect the rights of others at all times. Smoking, profane language, and misbehavior on the bus are prohibited. Repeated misbehavior or a single serious offense will result in losing bus privileges. If a student is on bus suspension, a parent is required to provide transportation to and from school. In an emergency situation only, students may take another bus with a written note from home and consent from the transportation supervisor.

Generally, transportation discipline includes the following procedures:

Misconduct Infractions:	Prohibited Infractions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of or attempt to get out of the safety belt • Improper boarding or departing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting, pushing, tripping • Hanging out windows

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bringing articles aboard of injurious or objectionable nature · Failure to remain seated · Rude, discourteous or annoying conduct · Hollering · Eating any type of food or candy · Failure to follow directions · Refusing to obey driver · Littering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Throwing objects in, out, or at bus · Open flames-matches, lighters, etc. · Improper behavior or threatening language (abusive, filthy, swearing) · Smoking/use of tobacco products · Drugs or related paraphernalia · Unauthorized departure from bus · Spitting · Tampering with bus equipment · Destruction of property · Weapons such as knives and firearms including toy pistols or cap guns · Riding bus to school and not attending school · Riding high school bus to VES then getting off bus and into personal vehicle · Riding in a personal vehicle from high school then getting on the bus at VES
Consequence:	Consequence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 1st offense – Written Warning · 2nd offense – Three (3) day suspension of bus privileges · 3rd offense – Five (5) day suspension of bus privileges · 4th offense – Ten (10) day suspension of bus privileges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 1st offense – Three (3) day suspension of bus privileges · 2nd offense – Five (5) day suspension of bus privileges · 3rd offense – Ten (10) day suspension of bus privileges

Students who are eligible to be transported to school by bus may not ride any bus except the one normally used. All buses are filled, and permission cannot be given to ride other buses to visit friends or to go to any other activities. In emergency or special situations where a bus change is required, parents are to contact Terry Chenette, Transportation Coordinator. Notes to drivers are not acceptable for a number of reasons. If a student misses the bus ride home, he or she should report directly to the School Office to inform the parent by phone and determine an alternative transport home. Students must have written parental permission to walk home.

If a parent wishes to request that a child be picked up or dropped off at a location other than his/her home to accommodate daycare and/or babysitting needs, they must complete a Special Transportation Request form. Special Transportation Request forms can be found on the VES website and in the VES main office.

Requests for transportation to or from a Daycare location will be granted under the following:

- The location of the requested daycare provider is on an existing bus route;
- There is space available on the bus to which the student would be assigned if the daycare request is honored.

Terry Chenette, our Transportation Coordinator in consultation with the school administration will address daycare provisions that do not meet the above criteria on an individual basis. **A NEW FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH ANY CHANGE.**

Bus riders - Remember that bus transportation is a privilege, not a right, and that you can be removed from the bus for up to 10 days because of your behavior. The following bus rules are in effect:

1. You are to be at your designated bus stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled bus pick-up time.
2. You are to wait at the stop in an orderly manner. Only when the bus comes to a full stop and the driver signals are you to enter the bus. When crossing in front of the bus, always walk 10 feet from the front of the bus and never walk behind the bus.
3. When you are on the bus, you are to sit with legs facing front and all of your belongings under the seat.
4. You are to remain seated at all times.
5. No eating or drinking on the bus.
6. Do not put anything outside the bus windows.
7. The bus driver and/or administration may assign seats to students.
8. The bus drivers may report in writing any student who is in violation of these bus rules.

NOTE: According to Board of Education Policy students in grades Pre-K and Kindergarten will be brought back to school if an adult is not present to get them off the bus. Parents will then need to make arrangements to pick them up at the school. Students in grades 1-12 will be dropped at their designated stop - please be sure they are able to enter the house.

Bus Camera Regulations

In order to provide a safe environment and assist bus drivers with the monitoring of student behavior on school busses, the Voluntown Board of Education has agreed to support the electronic surveillance program through

the use of the video camera. Busses are equipped with a live camera and will be videotaping during the school year. A posted warning will alert students to this possibility.

Videos will be confidentially reviewed on an as needed by the school administration in collaboration with the transportation coordinator to document misconduct. Students found in violation of bus conduct rules shall be notified and disciplinary action will be initiated under the district guidelines and procedures. Video recordings shall be treated as protected student records under FERPA or Family Educational Rights Act and Privacy Act and remain under the following regulations:

- Videos shall remain in the custody of the school system
- Based on privacy guidelines access to the tapes are available only to school authorities

A *special sign-off sheet* has been distributed with this handbook for a parent or guardian to sign and verify an understanding of the procedures concerning the use video recorders on the busses, that their child will be held accountable for following the rules, and that excellent behavior is expected on the bus.

Care of School Property

Students are responsible for all school property in their possession. When students are issued a book they will sign a receipt and put their name in the book. Textbooks shall be covered and protected at all times. Students are responsible for any damage or wear beyond the normal amount. Lost or stolen books must be paid for. Students who carelessly or maliciously destroy or damage school property will be held financially responsible and will face disciplinary action. Most textbooks, reference materials, library books, and other equipment at VES are of excellent quality. It is important to keep equipment in as good condition as possible. Any destruction or defacement will be dealt with severely. Each student is requested to inform the teacher of any problems or changes in the condition of school materials.

Cell Phone Policy/Personal Electronic Devices

Cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be kept at home.

Classroom Placement

A great deal of thought goes into placing children in classes each year. The process is also time consuming, as the teacher focuses on each child's needs. Every effort is made to place each child in a learning environment where they will be the most successful. This learning environment incorporates several factors. Therefore, we do not take classroom placement requests. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Requests can be made regarding your preference of AM or PM session. However, students are placed in either the morning or afternoon PreSchool/School Readiness session based on transportation routes and travel time. Therefore, we are not able to honor all requests.

Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for conducting themselves properly in a responsible manner appropriate to their age and level of maturity. The district has authority over students during the regular school day and while going to and from school on district transportation. This jurisdiction includes any school-related activity, regardless of time or location, and any off campus school-related misconduct, regardless of time or location. Student responsibilities for achieving a positive environment in school or related activities include:

1. Attending all classes, regularly and on time.
2. Being prepared for each class with appropriate materials and assignments.
3. Being dressed appropriately.
4. Showing respect toward others and behaving in a responsible manner.
5. Paying required fees and fines.
6. Abiding by the code of conduct.
7. Obeying all school rules, including safety rules, and rules pertaining to Internet safety.
8. Cooperating with staff investigations of disciplinary cases.
9. Volunteering information relating to a serious offense.

Students who violate these rules will be subject to disciplinary action and shall be referred when appropriate to legal authorities for violation of the law.

Students at school or school-related activities are prohibited from:

1. Engaging in academic dishonesty, including cheating, intentionally plagiarizing, wrongfully giving or receiving help during an academic examination and wrongfully obtaining test copies or scores.
2. Throwing objects that can cause bodily injury or damage property.
3. Leaving school grounds or school-sponsored events without permission.
4. Directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward other students or staff.
5. Disobeying directives from school personnel or school policies, rules, and regulations.
6. Being disrespectful or directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward teachers or other school employees.
7. Playing with matches, fire, or committing arson.
8. Committing robbery or theft.
9. Damaging or vandalizing property owned by the school, other students, or school employees.
10. Disobeying school rules on school buses.
11. Fighting, committing physical abuse, or threatening physical abuse.
12. Committing extortion, coercion, or blackmail; that is, forcing an individual to act through the use of force or threat of force.
13. Name-calling, making ethnic or racial slurs or derogatory statements that may substantially disrupt the school program or incite violence.
14. Engaging in an inappropriate physical or sexual contact disruptive to the school environment or disturbing to other students.
15. Assaulting a teacher, staff member or other individual.
16. Selling, giving, delivering, possessing, using or being under the influence of drugs such as: marijuana; a controlled substance or drug; or an alcoholic beverage.
17. Possessing a weapon or dangerous instrument.
18. Prescription drugs that are given to a person other than who the drug is prescribed.
19. Smoking or using tobacco products.
20. Hazing.
21. Behaving in any way that disrupts the school environment or educational process.
22. No student is allowed to possess an electronic pager, "beeper" device, cellular telephone, two-way radio or other telecommunication device on school property without prior approval of the principal.
23. Violating the district's Internet Safety policy.
24. Using or possessing a laser pointer unless under staff supervision and in the context of instruction.

Counseling

A full time certified school counselor and a part time School Psychologist are here to help all Pre-Kindergarten through eighth graders experiencing problems or concerns that are impacting education. A teacher, parent, or administrator may refer a student to counseling, or the student may contact the counselor directly. Counseling is confidential. Opportunities for parenting education and support activities are also provided.

C.I.T. (Crisis Intervention Team)

The Crisis Intervention Team was formed at Voluntown Elementary School in January of 1996 to actively respond to any crisis situation at school and develop a plan to deal with any crisis or emergency. Specific plans are in place for such emergencies as:

- Medical or other emergencies, natural disasters, sudden death or suicide, and other potential crisis situations.
- The C.I.T. promotes awareness and education of all school staff, support for high-risk students, coordination with community resources and managing crisis.

Current members of the Crisis Intervention Team are: Principal, Director of Special Education, School Counselor, Primary Grade Teacher, Director of Maintenance, School Nurse, Bus Coordinator, Athletic Director, Junior High School Teacher, Technology Coordinator, Superintendent, and other faculty or staff members as needed.

Curriculum: Guiding Principles

The Voluntown Readiness Program has adopted the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards and Preschool Curriculum Framework, (www.sde.ct.gov) as the core document from which our curriculum goals and practices flow. The following principles help guide planning and instruction. The Voluntown

School Readiness Program's primary goal is to foster the optimal development of children. We offer child-centered curricula based on knowledge of early childhood education and child development.

Early learning and development are multidimensional and interrelated. Skills may be taught and observed throughout the domains of development by addressing the following areas of development:

- Personal Social – sense of self as a learner, sense of responsibility, effective functioning within a group.
- Cognitive – including Logical Mathematics and Scientific Thinking and Language and Literacy by; engaging in problem solving, using language to interpret and convey meaning, establish social contacts and understand the physical and social world.
- Physical – control, balance, and coordination of gross motor tasks; coordination and strength in fine motor tasks; participation in healthy activity and practice of appropriate eating habits, hygiene and self-help skills.
- Creative and Aesthetic Development – the use of different art forms as a vehicle for creative expression and the development of an appreciation for the arts.

Young children learn through active exploration of their environments through child-initiated and teacher-selected activities.

Families are the primary caregivers and educators of their young children. Program staff and families work collaboratively to support children's development.

Teachers use the curriculum to guide their planning and make individual adaptations based on student's developmental needs as determined by assessment procedures.

The teachers use the Framework to plan schedules and activities in a manner that allows for flexibility, supports transitions, includes indoor and outdoor play, and acknowledges the children's need for activity and rest.

The Connecticut Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (PCF/PAF) are used as the basis for learning experiences observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teaching strategies. All curriculums used must align with the standards outlined in PCF/PAF.

Staff, parents and others collect information on quality and assess the program yearly through Parent and Staff surveys. Information from surveys is shared with incoming parents each year.

Department of Children and Families of the State of Connecticut

Under the law of the State of Connecticut, all teachers and school systems must report all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to D.C.F. It is the procedure of this school that any employee who suspects child abuse and/or neglect will report by phone and then in writing these concerns to D.C.F. The school places all investigations in the hands of D.C.F. The school will not inform parents of the report. All reports will be maintained in the D.C.F. related student records until we are directed to remove the files by D.C.F. All such records are not open to the staff without written permission from the principal.

Discipline and How to Behave in School

The school staff wants everyone to have a very successful year. No one has to feel uncomfortable in school because other students are treating them poorly. Everyone has the right to an education that is free of emotional, physical, or social threats. Therefore, the staff will enforce these regulations throughout the school, school grounds, and on all school-related trips, bus transportation, and after - school activities:

- Every person has the right to a safe school environment; therefore, no physical harm is to be inflicted by any other student, teacher or staff member.
- Every student has a right to learn; therefore, no student may disrupt any school social or academic activity.
- Every student and staff member has the right to an environment free from profane, obscene or generally unacceptable displays of clothing, books, language, etc. Therefore no clothes, printed materials, or language using and/or displaying such materials will be allowed.
- Every student must understand that this school has an absolute ZERO TOLERANCE for drugs, alcoholic beverages, and cigarette smoking (by students) anywhere in or on the school property.
- Every student must maintain actions, which help keep general order (health and safety) in the building. Actions like running in the hallway, false fire alarms, theft, destruction of property, threats or intimidation, etc. are banned since these actions lessen the general health and safety level in the building.
- Any students involved in fighting will serve a consequence.

Each classroom in the building has specific rules and consequences. Please ask your teachers for their specific classroom rules. The principal supports the teachers and their regulations.

There are consequences for students when a student decides to act against the basic school regulations. All of the following consequences are applied equally to every student. The school administrators do have the right to modify the consequences based on the seriousness of the violation.

Discipline Guidelines

Discipline guidelines are based on the values represented by our core words: Responsibility, Organization, Cooperation, Kindness and Safety. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a safe learning environment through the development of mutual respect for and between the students, staff, and school. School will provide a quality education in a structured program in which positive reinforcement is coupled with the consistency of consequences. Our underlying premise is that school needs to be orderly to maintain a safe, nurturing environment for students. Therefore, all students are expected to follow the fundamental rules listed below. These rules apply to any school activity.

SCHOOL RULES: “*Learning and Caring Beyond Oneself*”

- Responsibility -- Be responsible for your learning, actions and environment.
- Organization -- Be prepared, have appropriate materials, keep environment clean.
- Cooperation -- Be kind, respect authority, respect differences.
- Kindness -- Be positive and be a good role model.
- Safety -- Be safe in all you do.

Dismissal Procedures

Connecticut State Law mandates schools to instruct students a minimum number of hours each school year. Our procedures are in full compliance with state statutes.

Our Crisis Intervention Team and School Security and Safety Committee have put into effect the following dismissal procedures. **Due to security and safety reasons, if you are picking up your child at the end of their school day, you will no longer be allowed to wait in the school.** Your child will be dismissed from the Early Childhood doors. While waiting, please utilize the Early Childhood parking lot (the right parking lot when you enter VES). Any student not riding the school bus must be picked up promptly according their session (**Morning session: 11:25AM / Afternoon session: 3:20PM**).

Unfortunately, we do have available staff to monitor your child(ren) after dismissal times. We thank you for your understanding and compliance to our dismissal procedures.

Dismissal at the end of the School Day (AM session: 11:25AM / PM session: 3:20PM)

At the beginning of year, you will receive a DISMISSAL PROCEDURES FORM. You will be given four choices of how your child(ren) will be dismissed throughout the school year. **You must check one choice, sign and return this form to the main office during the first week of school.** If you choose to have your child dismissed as a pick-up every day, your child will be dismissed from the Early Childhood doors before all buses have been dismissed. **Parking is available in the Early Childhood parking lot (the right parking lot when you enter VES).** **Due to security and safety reasons, parents/guardians picking up children at the end of the school day will no longer be allowed to wait in the school.**

Dismissal during the school day (AM session: before 11:25AM / PM session: before 3:00PM)

Students that are picked up during the school day (before dismissal) must be dismissed from the main office. Please send a note in with your child to let us know you plan on having them dismissed early. **This note must be turned into your child’s homeroom teacher at the start of the day. We will also take phone calls or emails (send communications to Rhonda Bursey, rbursey@voluntownct.org or (860) 376-2325.** **Please be advised that the main office must be notified of a pick-up by the times above, otherwise, we will not be able to honor your request.**

For PM sessions students only: Students picked up during the school day must be dismissed before 3:00PM in the Main Office. After 3:00PM, students must be picked up at dismissal time (3:20PM) through the Early Childhood doors. Please note, we do not dismiss students between 3:00-3:20PM.

Parent/Guardian must sign out of the school with the main office personnel. Anyone who is signing out a student must be included on his/her emergency card. Please be prepared to have ID. If an emergency arises, and it becomes necessary for someone who is not listed on this card to pick up a student, it must be authorized by the parent in writing or faxed to the main office. No exceptions will be made.

Dismissal: Weather Related

Occasionally the weather conditions become worse after school has started. When it appears that conditions will be worse by dismissal time, the school will close early. Emergency closing times may vary based on weather conditions and at the Superintendent's discretion. Announcements will be made on the radio when that happens so parents will be aware of the change. Parents are asked to supply us with an emergency plan in case we dismiss school early. (See Emergency School Closing)

Dominant Language Survey

Each year school systems are required by statute PA 77-588 to survey parents or guardians to identify the dominant language spoken by students. This short survey is part of the information sign-off packet that was sent home with this handbook to be completed and returned to school.

Dress and Appearance

Students should dress in a comfortable, appropriate, and clean manner in order to maintain a safe and proper learning environment. Our dress and appearance expectations are designed to provide appropriate levels of decorum and decency to support a positive, welcoming, safe learning environment, while allowing students to express their individuality. Our Dress and Appearance Expectations are as follows:

- Flip-flops and sandals that make walking, running, or other activities less safe for students are discouraged. Sneakers are recommended.
- Parents are encouraged to send students to school with appropriate outerwear according to the weather and activities students will engage in.

Emergency School Closings and Delayed Opening Information

If the weather is a problem, it may be necessary to delay the opening of school. When this occurs, announcements are made on the local radio stations between 6:00 and 7:15 a.m.

AM—WICH 1310	FM—WCTY 97.7	TV—Channel 3
AM—WILI 1400	FM—WILI 98.3	TV—Channel 8
AM—WSUB 980	FM—WNLC 98.7	TV—Channel 30
	FM—WKNL 101	

Additionally, School Messenger is used to inform VES families of closings/delays via phone, text, and social media (VES Facebook page). School Messenger notifications are scheduled to be sent at 6:00am. VES weather announcements can also be found online at www.ctweather.com and www.voluntownct.org.

If an early dismissal is called, there will be no PM PreSchool/School Readiness classes, and classes will stay until dismissal time. Lunch is provided for students.

Emergency closing times may vary based on weather conditions and at the Superintendent's discretion. If a late opening is called there will be no AM PreSchool/School Readiness classes.

Field Trips

Each year students take a variety of educational field trips. Students are expected to represent their school for the fine institution that it is. In the case of reward trips, students may be excluded from trips due to a poor academic or behavioral record. Behavioral expectations found in school are always expected on field trips.

Parents/guardians are often asked to serve as chaperones on field trips. Some class trips have chaperones chosen by a lottery system. No other children in the family are allowed to come along on the grade level field trips.

Field Trip Costs

At Voluntown Elementary School, field trips are a part of the student academic and social program. No pupil shall be denied the opportunity to participate in classroom field trips because of financial hardship. Reasonable expectations for financial support of admission fees and transportation may be made of trip participants with the principal's approval. Therefore, if the cost of a field trip creates a financial hardship for any family, the **parent, not the student**, is requested to contact the principal to discuss payment options or other reasonable expectations of financial support to be considered.

Fires Drills and Safety Drills

At the sound of the fire alarm, students leave the building with their teacher, following the directions posted in each of your classrooms. It would be wise to find out those directions and learn them. Once outside, students are to remain at the assigned area until told to re-enter the building.

When students and adults get outside, they get away from the building; Do Not stay in the driveway (fire trucks and emergency vehicles may be coming.) Safety drills are also practiced. Please follow the teacher's directions for these drills.

Food Services Program

Voluntown Elementary School participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Students in our PreSchool/School Readiness Programs receive FREE lunch through this program, as it is a federal grant program (School Readiness Grant). Parents are requested to complete a National School Lunch Program form prior to the beginning of school. Nutrition, as well as, nutrition education is provided by the program.

“Fragrance Free” School

As part of an ongoing effort to implement our “IAQ/TfS” priorities, it is important to consider factors that might influence the quality of our indoor air as well as the impact on individuals who are in the building or visiting. It was therefore decided that we would implement a “Fragrance Free” initiative. This requires a careful review of the chemicals that are used for cleaning. It also requires avoiding perfumes or other fragrances that might flow throughout classrooms and offices and have a potential adverse affect on individuals who are highly sensitive and may have a reaction. Thank you for your support and help with these efforts.

Green Cleaning: Standard Precautions

As part of maintaining a healthy environment for staff and children, the following precautions will be followed by the Readiness Program and Maintenance Staff. All cleaning and sanitizing products must conform to the Green Clean Program and are to be labeled with Manufacturer’s Label. The Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) are to be readily available for reference.

- All surfaces that are exposed to infectious bodily fluids must be made of a disposable material or one that can be sanitized.
- Staff will use disposable gloves when handling situations that expose them to bodily fluids, openings in the skin, and mucous membranes.
- When spills occur, staff members clean them up immediately with detergent followed by rinsing with water.
- After cleaning, staff members sanitize nonporous surfaces as described in the cleaning procedure.
- Staff will clean carpet by blotting and spot cleaning with sanitizing detergent and inform custodial staff of the need to shampoo carpet.
- Staff members dispose of contaminated materials in a plastic bag that is tied securely and place in a secured container.
- Staff will use proper hand hygiene following all above situations. (Refer to hand washing chart)

The Voluntown Board of Education adopted this Green Cleaning Program.

Hand Washing Procedures

The program follows the following practices regarding hand washing:

- a) Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand washing procedures and are periodically monitored.
- b) Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers and children when hand washing would reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others.
- c) Staff assist children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance.

Children and adults wash their hands:

- d) On arrival for the day;
- e) After diapering or after using the toilet (use of wet wipes is acceptable for infants);
- f) After handling bodily fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on hand, or touching mucus, blood, or vomit);

- g) Before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after handling any raw food that requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, poultry);
- h) After playing in water that is shared by two or more people;
- i) After handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals; and
- j) When moving from one group to another (e.g., visiting) that involves contact with infants and toddlers/twos

Adults also wash their hands:

- k) Before and after feeding a child,
- l) Before and after administering medication,
- m) After assisting a child with toileting, and
- n) After handling garbage or cleaning.

Proper hand washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include:

- o) Using liquid soap and running water;
- p) Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, under fingernails; rinsing well; drying hands with a paper towel, a single use towel, or a dryer; and avoiding touching the faucet with just washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water).

Except when handling blood for body fluids that might contain blood (when wearing gloves is required), wearing gloves is an optional supplement, but not a substitute for, handwashing in any required hand washing situation listed above.

- q) Staff wear gloves when contamination with blood may occur.
- r) Staff do not use hand washing sinks for bathing children or for removing smeared fecal material.
- s) In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation or other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

Hand hygiene with an alcohol based sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol is an alternative to traditional hand washing.

Health Services

Health Assessment Record Policy

In compliance with the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, an Early Childhood Health Assessment Record (ED 191) form for your child must be submitted and kept on file with the school nurse. This health form must indicate that your child has had a physical exam within the past 12 months and that she/he meets current vaccination requirements. The health form must be signed by a physician. If your child has any serious medical conditions, serious allergies (to food, medication, or insect stings), or any other physical or medical restrictions, a parent/guardian will provide the school nurse and Authorization for the Administration of Medicines form signed by the parent/guardian and the child's physician.

Communicable/Infectious Diseases

Students with any medical condition, which within the school setting may expose others to disease, or contagious and infectious conditions may be excluded from school and referred for medical diagnosis and treatment. Additional information concerning this may be obtained from the school nurse.

Before a child may return to school after an absence due to such condition, parents and students may be required to submit medical evidence that their child has recovered sufficiently to prevent exposing others.

1. Any student diagnosed with strep throat, must be at home for 24-48 hours after starting the antibiotic prescribed by your physician
2. Any student with a temperature above 100 degrees F. will be sent home.
3. The Council on School Health has determined that "no healthy child should be excluded from or allowed to miss school time because of head lice. "No-nit" policies for return to school should be abandoned." Our school nurse can check a child's head if requested to do so by a parent. Our school nurse will also distribute available accurate information about the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of head lice in an understandable form to the entire school community.

Health Screenings

The school nurse will administer and/or supervise screenings for vision, hearing and scoliosis as required by state law. Parents wishing to have these screenings done by private physicians shall provide a report of screening results to the school nurse.

Illness Policy

If, upon arrival at school, it is obvious to the school nurse that your child is ill, a parent/guardian will be contacted and are expected to pick up their child. Also, if during the course of your child’s day, your child is unable to participate in the curriculum activities due to suspected illness, you will be contacted and are expected to pick up your child. Please, use your best judgment in determining if your child is healthy enough to attend school. The goal is to keep the school environment as healthy as possible for all students and staff.

The school nurse will be monitoring for the following illnesses:

- o Severe cold and fever (100 degrees F or above), sneezing, nose drainage, and coughing.
- o Conjunctivitis (an eye infection commonly referred to as “pink eye”).
- o Bronchitis. This can begin with hoarseness, cough, and slight elevation in temperature.
- o Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician.
- o Impetigo. Begins as red pimples on the skin, which eventually become small vesicle surrounded by a reddened area. When the blister breaks, the surface is raw and weeping.
- o Diarrhea. Watery or greenish bowel movements.
- o Vomiting more that the usual “spitting up”.
- o With a contagious disease, a child must be kept home and the school nurse notified. The child may only return to school with a signed note from his/her physician. Illnesses include: measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, and strep throat.

If your child comes to school with the symptoms of flu, as described above, or if your child develops these symptoms when they are at school, your child will be sent home for at least 24 hours after they are fever-free or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

If your child is prescribed an antibiotic, the child should not attend school until he/she has been on the medication for at least 24 hours. Please, contact the school nurse.

Immunizations

All students must be immunized against certain diseases and must present a certificate from a physician or local health agency. If the student should not be immunized due to medical or religious reasons, a statement from a physician or the parent as appropriate must be provided. The required immunizations are: Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio, Pertussis, Measles, Mumps, Hepatitis B, Chicken Pox, Rubella and Hemophilic Influenza Type B. Parents or guardians of any children unable to have the mandated immunizations prior to initial school entry and the boosters as required in the later grades may have the immunizations, on the recommendation of the Board of Education, be paid by the town.

In addition to the required immunizations for initial entry into school for kindergarten, regular and special education preschool programs, additional immunizations are required for entry into seventh grade and for entry into eighth grade. The school must enroll any homeless student even if the student is unable to produce the required medical and immunization records.

Immunization Entry Requirements

Vaccine	Grade	Number of Doses
Pneumococcal	PK and K (born 1/1/2007 or later and less than 5 years old)	1 dose on or after 1st birthday
Hepatitis A	PK and K (born 1/1/2007 or later)	2 doses given six months apart-1st dose on or after 1st birthday
Influenza	PK (age 24-59 months) given annually between Aug. 1 and Dec. 31 each year	1 dose- (2 doses for those receiving flu vaccine for 1st time)
MMR	K-12	2 doses given at least 28 days apart -1st dose on or after 1st birthday
Varicella	PK	1st dose on or after 1st birthday
Varicella	K and Grade 7 entry	2 doses given 3 months apart- 1st dose on or after 1st birthday
Tdap	Grade 7 entry	1 dose
Meningococcal	Grade 7 entry	1 dose

Immunization: Influenza (Flu)

The Connecticut immunization regulation a minimum dose of influenza for school entry, each year between August 1st and December 31st, for all children ages 24months to 4 years (59 months).

Connecticut General Statute §§ 10-204a-1—10-204a-4.

1. Children who have not received the flu vaccine by December 31st must be excluded from school for the duration of influenza season (through March 31st) or until they receive at least one dose of the influenza vaccine.
2. Children do not have to be excluded from school if the following conditions are met:
 - 1) the school has received a statement signed by the child's HCP indicating that the child has an appointment to receive the required immunization (this is considered "immunization in progress"). Continued enrollment in school for more than thirty days after the named immunization appointment shall be contingent on the school receiving written documentation from the HCP stating either: that the named appointment was kept and the child received the scheduled immunizations, or that the child was unable to receive the scheduled immunizations for medical reasons and a new appointment date is named;
 - 2) the school has received a statement signed and dated by the child's HCP indicating that the child has a medical contraindication to immunization;
 - 3) the school has received a written statement that immunization is contrary to the religious beliefs and practices of the child or the parent of such child. Such statement shall be signed by the child's parent.

A special sign-off sheet has been distributed with this handbook acknowledging the above requirement.

Medication

According to Connecticut law, students are not to take any form of medication in the school without the knowledge and supervision of the school nurse and a physician's written order. This includes over the counter medications. An adult must bring all medications to the school. Students are not allowed to carry medications for any reason. The nurse will store and administer medications as ordered by your family physician. The necessary medical forms are available in the Health Office for the purpose of administering medication.

Medication Regulation

Safeguards are used with all medications for children:

- a) Staff administer both prescription and over-the-counter medications to a child only if the child's record documents that the parent/legal guardian has given the program written permission.
- b) The child's record includes instructions from the licensed health provider who has prescribed or recommended medication for that child; alternatively, the licensed health provider's office may give instructions by telephone to the program staff.
- c) Any administrator or teaching staff who administers medication has a) specific training and b) a written performance evaluation updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the five right practices of medication administration: 1) verifying that the right child receives the 20 right medication 3) in the right dose 4) at the right time 5) by the right method with documentation of each right each time the medication is given. The person giving the medication signs documentation of items 1) through 5) above. Teaching staff who are required to administer special medical procedures have demonstrated to a health professional that they are competent in the procedures and are guided in writing about how to perform the procedure by the prescribing health care provider.
- d) Medications are labeled with the child's first and last names, the date that either the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health provider, the name of the licensed provider, the expiration date of the medication, or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.
- e) All medications are kept in a locked container.

Homeless Students

Homeless students, as defined by federal and state legislation, will have all programs, services, and transportation that other students enjoy and may continue to attend the school of origin. The local liaison for homeless children is the principal.

Home ~ School Partnership

Our school community aspires to have each child investigate, master, and apply the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors essential for productive lifelong learning and meaningful participation in society. While learning becomes the student's responsibility, it is the role of teachers and parents to support, nurture, and guide the process. Our youth flourish where learning is a collaborative home and school effort. Therefore, in the home and school relationship it is essential that:

- Parents and teachers direct constructive and ongoing communication that is prompt, courteous, and focused on the well being of the student. Teacher suggestions for scholastic improvement and follow-up, particularly in consistent daily monitoring of homework completion and overall academic achievement, should be adhered to. Communication and remediation of problems supported at the parent-teacher level are focused on obtaining appropriate and direct solutions.
- Parents and teachers recognize the academic, physical, social and emotional development of the child is a shared and overlapping responsibility of the school, the family, and the community at-large. At home and at school, a high priority is given to learning and the positive development of each child.
- Parents and teachers contribute to an atmosphere of respect among students, themselves, and between students and adults. High standards are established for each student's responsibilities in the learning process, for behavior, and for respect for other people and for property.
- The intention of the school is that the home and school relationship be positive, productive and, most importantly, established in the best interest of each student.
- School personnel may be reached via email/phone.

Indoor Environmental Safety Rules

1. A fully equipped First Aid Kit will be readily available to the staff at all times. This kit should be used for minor first aid needs. Utilize the school nurse for needs not able to be met with this kit.
2. Toys that have been in contact with the child's mouth or other bodily fluids will be washed by hand using water and detergent, then rinsed, sanitized and air dried or washed and dried in a mechanical dishwasher before it can be used by another child.
3. The routine frequency of cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces in the facility is performed according to the NAEYC Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table. Ventilation and sanitation, rather than sprays, fresheners and deodorizers will be used to control odors.
4. If at any time there are climbers, sliders or other play units indoors, proper safety surfacing will be utilized within the fall zone as recommended by the manufacturer. All furnishings (such as lofts) are constructed to prevent falls using appropriate barriers or safety surfacing in the fall zone.
5. Indoor large motor skill activity equipment will meet the national safety standards and have the same level of supervision as outdoor equipment.
6. Every effort is made to protect adults and children from hazards including electrical shock, burns or scalding, slipping, tripping or falling. Floor coverings will be secured to prevent tripping.
7. Areas that are recently painted, carpeted, tiled or otherwise renovated are to be done during school vacations. If this is not possible, the children will not be present during the renovation and the area will be properly ventilated before the program uses them.
8. Areas used by staff or children who have allergies to dust mites or to components of furnishings or supplies, are maintained by the program according to the recommendations of health professionals.

IAQ/TfS (Indoor Air Quality/Tools for Schools) Policy

The Board of Education approved an IAQ/TfS (Indoor Air Quality/Tools for Schools) policy in 2006 to meet state guidelines. An IAQ/TfS Committee has met on a regular basis to develop recommendations and effectively implement this program.

All faculty and staff participate in reporting information to the committee to effectively assess the maintenance and facility needs of our school. Air quality priorities are determined by gathering data about such things as general cleanliness, excess moisture, thermal comfort, ventilation, educational supplies, local exhaust fans, and general comments. Mr. Paul Ricard, our Director of Maintenance and Facilities, has been highly successful in follow-through with repairs and maintenance.

The IAQ/TFS Committee receives regular reports of all facility and maintenance repairs to support the creation a list for the Board of Education to consider in the budget process for both short and long term facilities and maintenance priorities.

Insurance

School insurance is made available to families through a specific program. Brochures are distributed to all students at the beginning of each academic year. While the program is not mandatory, it is suggested that parents take advantage of the opportunity to provide adequate protection for their children while in school. Any such arrangement is contractual between the parent and insurance carriers and the Voluntown Public School assumes no liability from disputes arising from such contract.

Insurance: Connecticut HUSKY Health Insurance Plan

Healthy children do well in school. The State of Connecticut has a special HUSKY Health Insurance Plan that pays for doctor visits (including physical exams), prescriptions, emergency care, vision and dental care, mental health care, special health care needs and more. It is for children under age 19 in families of all incomes. Over 230,000 children now have their health care covered by the HUSKY Plan.

If your child is uninsured and you would like to participate in the Connecticut HUSKY Plan visit www.huskyhealthplan.com or call the information hotline at 1-877-284-8759.

Library/Media Center

The library/media center houses a collection of materials designed to meet a variety of needs and abilities. The center provides students and staff with a variety of books, magazines, newspapers and other materials. Students receive a library/media center orientation early in the school year that helps provide them with the resources to use the center most effectively. Students may sign out materials between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Parents may also sign out materials.

Most books may be borrowed for two weeks and may usually be renewed. Students are responsible for all materials that they sign out. It is the student's responsibility to return all borrowed books to the book drop located in the library. Students who damage or fail to return a book will be required to pay for it or lose the privilege of borrowing books.

Lost & Found and Personal Belongings

Any articles which are found in the school or on school grounds should be turned in at the Main Office. Unclaimed articles will be disposed of at the end of each trimester. Loss or suspected theft of personal or school property should be reported to the Main Office.

Personal Belongings and valuables should not be brought to school. No home toys are allowed at recess.

Media Release

The Board of Education recognizes the important role the media serves in reporting information about programs and activities. The district will make every reasonable effort to provide media access to students. School administrators are authorized to grant permission and set parameters for media access to students in their respective grade. The media may interview and photograph students involved in instructional programs and activities including athletic events provided their presence will not be unduly disruptive and shall comply with policies and goals. *Parents who do not want their student interviewed, photographed, or videotaped by the media shall inform the school principal accordingly.*

Migrant Students

The district has a program to address the needs of migrant students. A full range of services will be provided to migrant students, including applicable Title I programs, special education, gifted education, vocational education, language programs, counseling programs and elective classes. Parents/guardians of migrant students will

be involved in and regularly consulted about the development, implementation, operation and evaluation of the migrant program.

Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy/Procedures

The Voluntown Public Schools/Voluntown Board of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, parenthood, veteran status, genetic information, or disability (including, but not limited to intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws (Policy # 4118.11/4218.11).

Ms. Emily MacEwen, School Counselor and Title IX Coordinator for the Voluntown Elementary School has the responsibility to monitor compliance with this policy. Ms. Alycia M. Trakas, Principal/Assistant Superintendent, is the Civil Rights Coordinator for the Voluntown Board of Education. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact them (see below):

Ms. Emily MacEwen
School Counselor / VES Title IX Coordinator
Voluntown Elementary School
195 Main Street / PO Box 129
Voluntown, CT 06384
(860) 376-2325
emacewen@voluntownct.org

Amy Suffoletto
Principal/ Civil Rights Coordinator
Voluntown Elementary School
195 Main Street / PO Box 129
Voluntown, CT 06384
(860) 376-2325
asuffoletto@voluntownct.org

Outdoor Play and Play Area Policy

Children will have daily opportunities for outside play, weather permitting. If the weather is not conducive to outdoor play other opportunities will be offered for the children to have large motor skill opportunities during the day.

Staff will select material and equipment that will support the curriculum, help meet program goals, and foster the achievement of desired outcomes for children.

The play area will meet the American Disabilities Act requirements.

1. A fully equipped first aid kit will be readily available during outdoor play.
2. In cold weather the children will wear dry and layered clothing that will protect them from the cold.
3. In hot weather the children will be encouraged to play in the shade.
4. In hot weather the parents will be reminded to have the children wear appropriate sun-protective clothing and/or to apply SPF 15 or higher sunscreen. It is the policy of the VRC to not apply sunscreen to the children in the program, unless requested in writing and provided by parent. Sunscreen is to be clearly marked with student's name.

The Voluntown School Readiness Program does not apply insect repellent of any kind. When public health authorities require it, the parents will be asked to apply it at home. The school property is a smoke free zone, including all outdoor play areas.

The children will be protected from excessive cold, heat or other environmental or air quality issues. The school will use the local news agencies for regular monitoring of weather conditions. For extreme situations the school will utilize the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association alert system. For environmental air quality alerts the local Department of Health or Fire Department will notify the school. The Program Administrator (school principal) will notify the teaching staff.

The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insects, pests and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents any exposure to children such as skin contact or inhalation. Whenever possible the least hazardous means are used to control unwanted animals or plants.

Sandboxes will be constructed to allow for proper drainage, they will be covered when not in use. The staff will ensure that sand is clean and replaced regularly.

If at any time water play is part of the program all precautions are taken to ensure communal water does not spread infectious diseases. Children will not drink the water. Children with open sores on their hand will not be allowed to play in the water. Fresh portable water is used and changed prior to a new group of children. After the activity time has ended the water will be drained, through the drain in the table.

Outside Activities

In many academic areas of study during the school year, students will be going outside on the school grounds and into Pachaug State Forest for classes. In addition Voluntown Elementary School uses Constitution Field, along with the adjacent walking track and surrounding pond for recess, classes, athletic events, and other activities. Teachers try to take the students outside whenever possible to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact building administration.

Parent Involvement Policy

Education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school based on communications and interactions. Parents/guardians are urged to encourage their children to put a high priority on education and to make the most of educational opportunities. Parents/guardians should become familiar with all of the child's school activities and available academic programs, including special programs. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in parent organizations, attendance at Board of Education meetings and being a school volunteer are strongly encouraged.

In accordance with Policy 1111 **Parent Involvement and the Parent Involvement Compact**: Parenting skills should be promoted and supported. Communication between home and school should be regular, two-way and meaningful. Parents should play an integral role in assisting student learning. Parents should be welcome in every school and their support and assistance sought. Parent input should be sought regarding decisions that affect children and families. Community resources should be made available to strengthen school programs, family practice and student learning.

Parent/Teacher Communications

The PreSchool/School Readiness teacher will call and arrange home a visit with students prior to them beginning in the class. Families who are new to the program will have an orientation of the program before school begins. Written communications will be given to the families at least weekly, sharing ongoing classroom activities and individualized information concerning their child. The program has an open door policy and parents are welcome to visit the program at any time. Parent conferences will be held at least twice a year when the Voluntown Elementary School staff holds their conferences. Parents are welcome to set up additional conferences whenever they have questions or concerns they would like to discuss with their child's teacher. A school nurse is available to the program at the school. In cases of emergencies parents will be contacted as soon as possible, and emergency medical care will be provided.

Parents can call teachers during the school day at (860) 376-2325. They may leave a voicemail and the teachers will get back to the parents as quickly as possible. Email is another form of communication. Teacher email addresses are available through our school website at www.voluntownct.org. Staff members make every attempt to return communications within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.

Parents need to follow the communication process. That is, call/email the person most directly concerned. Calls should go directly to the teacher, then Building Administration, and then the Superintendent. Another method, after all of the other avenues have been tried, is to go directly to the Board of Education which meets every month in the Board of Education room at the Superintendent's Office.

All parents are encouraged to discuss any and all educational concerns with the professional staff. If there are concerns, which the parent wishes to address to the Building Administrator, any parent may request a meeting simply by calling school to make an appointment. The Administrators will see parents as quickly as possible if you must come to school for an emergency.

Without administrative understanding of parents' concerns, there is little ability to solve problems. No parent should feel that by voicing a concern that their children will suffer negatively.

All student records are available for review. Please call the office to request that review.

All legal issues, for example, restraining orders, divorce decrees, must be brought to the attention of the school office. Without current copies of any legal orders on file, the school cannot be held accountable to enforce those orders.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parents are important partners in their child's educational successes. Conferences with teachers may be held at any time during the school year. Parents and students, as well as teachers, counselors or administrators may initiate a conference.

A parent or student may arrange a conference with an individual member of the school staff or a group conference with school staff members. Conferences are held during school hours but every effort will be made to accommodate parent schedules.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

The PTO is a vital link between the school and the community and parents are invited to join and take an active part. The mission of the PTO is three-fold:

1. To support and speak on behalf of the youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental agencies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children.
2. To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children.
3. To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

The objectives of the PTO are to:

1. Promote the welfare of children in home, school and community
2. Raise the standards of home life
3. Secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth
4. Bring into closer relation the home and the school for parents and teachers to cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth
5. Develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.

Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is considered a safety issue. Please follow rules of good personal hygiene.

Pesticide Application Notice

Connecticut General Statute 10-231 to 10-231d requires school systems to send a notification of the policy for applying with a description of the prior years applications. We are also required to implement and maintain a registry for parents/guardians who wish to be notified of pesticide applications during the school year. The method of application of pesticides at school is strictly regulated and must be applied by an applicator with operational certification.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that students, employees and parents/guardians of the Voluntown Public Schools receive adequate notice, in conformity with applicable statutes, prior to pesticide application in school buildings or on school grounds and will only employ certified applicators for any non-emergency pesticide use in school buildings or on school grounds.

Preschool Assessment of Children

The Voluntown School Readiness faculty is trained to use a variety of formal and informal methods for assessing children. The results of assessments are used to inform parents about their child's development, strengths and weaknesses, guide programming decisions, facilitate intentional teaching practices and determine the need for early intervention special education services. The faculty will work to achieve consensus with families about assessment methods that will best meet the child's needs. All assessments occur in familiar settings. The following are the instruments used in the Voluntown School Readiness Program.

Teacher Made Assessments

Throughout the year, teachers use a variety of checklists, rubrics, and anecdotal records to establish baselines, monitor progress and guide instruction; they are administered at the teacher's discretion.

The Preschool Assessment Framework

This is used as the primary assessment document for the Preschool. It is administered throughout the year, (October, January, and June) with written reports given to parents in November and April. Data is collected through observation and children's work. Progress reports are based upon the criteria in the Curriculum Framework. Results are shared with parents at conferences and via progress reports.

Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development

Special Education students are given the Brigance within four weeks of entry and at exit from the program for the purposes of State data collection. If requested, parents are given an overview of the results. Families with children receiving Special Education Services will receive goal progress reports twice yearly and a summary of progress at an annual review.

All family members are provided information, either verbally or in writing about their child's development and learning on at least a quarterly basis with written report at least two times a year. Communication with families about their child's assessment shall be sensitive to family values, culture identity, and home language. Only the family and teaching staff, who work with the child and administration, will have access to the child's assessment results. All files are kept locked in file cabinets in the classroom and the school office.

Positive Behavior Support (Conscious Discipline)

Positive behavior support meshes the values, attitudes, climate, culture and discipline of a school to help students want to be active, contributing members of a rich school environment. Students are taught behavioral expectations in the various settings they encounter throughout the school day. Our school uses a variety of positive reinforcement to help recognize and promote appropriate behaviors.

Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the students' education records. They are:

The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the District receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible students may ask school districts to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the district decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the district will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel). A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request the district discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. (Note: FERPA requires a school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records upon request.) There is a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington DC 202024605
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Professional Development

Teachers and staff are provided professional development in topics appropriate to the young students. The overall goal is to engage in an ongoing cycle of intentional teaching that supports a path of growth over time toward learning outcomes for children based on state early learning standards. The process of planning, implementing, observing and assessing is braided through the context of early learning standards, child interests, cultural and community context, and family. The use of early learning standards is balanced with child interests and in the contexts in which children live and learn. A key factor in outcomes that lead to children's future success is the ability of teaching staff, with support from their administrators and others, to engage in intentional practice in the use of early learning standards to plan, implement, observe and assess children's progress.

Race and Ethnicity Questionnaire (Mandated)

All school systems are required by a federal mandate to send home at the beginning of each school year a special survey each year for parents or guardians to complete to more accurately identify racial and ethnic classifications. This information is requested on the Student Information Sheet.

Registration Regulations: Residency, Age Eligibility, Program Enrollment

Voluntown offers a PreSchool/School Readiness Program with a.m. or p.m. sessions for three, four, and five year olds (not eligible for Kindergarten). The hours of each session are currently 8:50AM to 11:25AM and 12:45PM to 3:20PM. Lunch is included free of charge. Transportation is provided free of charge.

For a student to be considered for entrance into these programs they must be a legal resident of Voluntown. Students living outside of the Voluntown town lines will not be accepted into the programs. If spaces are available, the School Readiness Council may open the program to non-residents, for the remainder of that particular school year, however, Voluntown residents will always be given top priority.

Our program accepts three, four, and five years olds (not eligible for Kindergarten). Students that turn five on or before January 1 are eligible for our full-day Kindergarten Program. Registration in our PreSchool/School Readiness Program for Voluntown Residents is based on a first-come, first-served, rolling admission basis and are accepted year round.

Program Enrollment Guidelines:

1. Students do not need to be potty-trained to attend the programs. We work with families to prepare their child(ren) for school in all aspects of their early learning and development.
2. Parents are encouraged to register their child(ren) during the PK/K registration period, as there are a limited number of spaces, however, we accept registrations throughout the school year.
3. Parental requests can be made regarding your preference of AM or PM session. However, students are placed in either the morning or afternoon PreSchool/School Readiness session based on transportation routes and travel time. Therefore, we are not able to honor all requests. Final placements are determined by the Transportation Coordinator and Administration.
4. Special Education students are given top priority.

Safety and Accident Prevention

Student safety at school related events is a high priority. Safety procedures require cooperation and students should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the school's code of discipline.
- Remain alert to and promptly report safety hazards, such as intruders on campus.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of staff who are overseeing the welfare of students.

Safety Belts

To increase the safety of our students using school transportation, effective Monday, January 31, 2016, all students utilizing Voluntown Public Schools transportation will be required to wear safety belts, if the vehicle they are travelling in is equipped with them.

All students must wear the required safety belts. Any removal of the safety belt or attempt to get out of the safety belt is unacceptable and will result in disciplinary action.

Safety Seat ~ Booster Seat Harness

On rare occasions, an appropriate size booster seat harness may be necessary for the safety and security of our students. This seat will be used ONLY in an emergency situation and ONLY after a seat belt has been tried and found to be insufficient. At NO time should the booster seat harness be used on a continuous basis or as a consequence.

Sale of Food and Beverages

The Board of Education permits the sale of other beverages and food to students at “events” or “an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity”. Events include such things as a soccer game, debate, school play or musical, chess match, a dance, etc. Soccer practice, play rehearsals, or a chess club meeting are not events and these do not qualify.

The Board of Education, voted to permit the sale of beverages and food not meeting the Connecticut Nutrition Standards at events if three conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event (dance) occurring after the end of the regular school day or on a weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event; and, (3) the items are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

School Calendar:

Published annually and changes will be announced in the weekly school Newsletter. On an annual basis, the last day of the preschool program will be set for two days prior to the end of the school year by the School Readiness Council.

School Ceremonies and Observances

The school district recognizes the value of certain ceremonies and observances in promoting patriotism and good citizenship among the students. Therefore, activities in schools commemorating national holidays such as Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents’ Day, and Memorial Day are encouraged. Students, faculty and administration seek to develop an awareness of the variety of religious beliefs, and all are urged to be conscious of and respect the sensitivities of others.

Activities related to a religious holiday or theme will be planned to ensure that the activity is not devotional, and that students of all faiths can join without feeling that they are betraying their own beliefs. Therefore,

1. School and class plays shall not be overly religious, and church-like scenery will be avoided;
2. Religious music shall not entirely dominate the selection of music; and,
3. Program notes and illustrations shall not be religious or sectarian.

An opportunity will be provided, at the beginning of each school day, for students to observe an appropriate period of silent meditation and to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Participation in these activities is voluntary. Non-participants are expected to maintain order and decorum appropriate to the school environment.

School Grounds

Students are expected to behave with common sense on school grounds. The school is not open to students before 8:30 a.m. and after 3:30 p.m. (except for sports activities and when students are in rooms with teachers present). We do not want to have anyone hurt who uses school equipment. The head of maintenance inspects our playground equipment twice per year and monthly inspects the school grounds for hazards, broken glass, etc. Please be aware that the forest areas contain poison ivy, which can cause a severe skin rash. Stay out of the forest area and play only on school grounds.

School Records

All records are confidential. Student files and records do not contain any personal descriptions. Parents or guardians may examine school records. Parents must call the school secretary for an appointment. Preschool records are transferred to Kindergarten within the school system.

Section 504

Definition: Section 504 is a Civil rights Law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. This federal mandate requires that students who are disabled under the definition of Section 504 are evaluated, identified and provided with access to educational opportunities equivalent to their non-disabled peers. Section 504 provides accommodations and services to remove barriers to learning.

-Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Student Eligibility: The Voluntown Board of Education is committed to providing students eligible under Section 504 with appropriate accommodations and services to afford them access to educational opportunities equivalent to their non-disabled peers. If a person has (1) a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Security

We, at Voluntown Elementary School, want to assure you that we are taking every measure possible to keep all of our students, faculty and staff safe and secure. Faculty members and members of the VES Crisis Intervention Team met with town emergency officials to develop our crisis plans. We have had plans in place for some time now and periodically review and update them. We practice safety drills as well as fire drills.

In the event of an actual emergency, we ask that you do your best to remain calm and patient. We know that can be asking a lot during a crisis; however, until we have had an opportunity to assess the situation, we ask that you stay off the school's phone lines. We will be working closely with the State Police, the Voluntown Fire Department and town emergency officials should the need arise and cannot thank them enough for their support and guidance. We do have a plan in place for parents that choose to pick up their children at school. Traffic flow will be directed by school authorities and a way for parents to sign out children at the office will be in place.

We do ask that you consider allowing students to stay in school, if it is decided that the school day will continue as a full session day. Experts have stated that keeping a normal routine is the most reassuring for students. Please review early dismissal plans with your children, in the event that we are told to close school and send students home, and make sure they are able to get into their house and have phone numbers available should they need to call you.

We also suggest that you limit TV viewing for your young children and watch with your children so that you can discuss what they saw with them and reassure them.

Harassment/Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures

Sexual harassment (Policy # 5145.5) will not be tolerated among students. Any form of sexual harassment is forbidden whether by student, supervisory or nonsupervisory personnel, individuals under contract, or volunteers in the schools. Students shall exhibit conduct that is respectful and courteous to employees, to fellow students, and to the public.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal or physical, including, but not limited to:

1. Insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct;
2. Threats or suggestions that a student's submission to, or rejection of, unwelcome conduct will in any way influence a decision regarding that student;
3. Conduct of a sexual nature that substantially interferes with the student's learning or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning environment, such as the display in the educational setting of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

The Board of Education encourages victims of sexual harassment to report such claims promptly to the superintendent of schools or his/her designee. Complaints shall be investigated promptly and corrective action taken when allegations are verified. Confidentiality shall be maintained and no reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith charges of sexual harassment.

If you feel that you are the victim of sexual harassment, you may also file a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, 21 Grand Street, Hartford, CT 06106 at toll free 800-477-5737, TDD 860-541-3459. For Connecticut, as required, a formal written complaint may be filed with the Commission within 180 days of the date when the alleged harassment occurred. Furthermore, you may also file a complaint with the Boston Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Education, 33 Arch Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02110-1491, Telephone: 617-289-0111, FAX: 617-289-0150, TDD: 877-521-2172, Email: OCR.Boston@ed.gov. If you have questions or concerns, please contact any of the following staff members:

Amy L. Suffoletto
Principal
Civil Rights/School Climate Coordinator
(860) 376-2325
asuffoletto@voluntownct.org

Emily MacEwen
School Counselor
VES Title IX Coordinator
(860) 376-2325
emacewen@voluntownct.org

Special Education Programs

The district provides special programs for those with disabilities, which affect a student's success at school. Questions about programs should be addressed to Lloyd A. Johnson, Ph.D., the Director of Student Services, who is available to answer questions about eligibility requirements, programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations.

For students in need of Special Education programs, a PPT or Planning and Placement Team is designed to provide communication and decision-making at the school level concerning the effective use of available resources. The team is also responsible for follow-up and periodic review of all students presently in Special Education and special services programs.

Speech and Language Pathologist conduct entrance screenings for all new PreSchool/School Readiness students in September; and two Universal Screenings for all students for Articulation/Language & Hearing to Pre-K and Kindergarteners in May as well as new PK/K registrations. They also conduct Articulation/Language screening to 2nd graders during October and November.

Any child identified as possibly needing special education and/or related services must be referred to this special Planning and Placement Team to review the need for an evaluation. A follow-up PPT after completion of the evaluation will determine whether Special Education services are required. Parents must give their consent before any evaluation can be done or any services can begin. An IEP or Individualized Education Plan, based upon the diagnostic findings of the evaluation study will be developed by the PPT, with parental involvement.

Specialists needing to serve a student and the homeroom teacher will have ongoing communication, updates and consultation with each other and the family. Students with disabilities already require an Annual Review PPT prior to the end of the school year with the current teacher present to ensure a smooth transition to the next grade level.

Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) are therapies (OT, PT, and Speech) provided to students, usually in PreSchool or Kindergarten with developmental delays in the area of speech, fine or gross motor activities. Teachers may request an OT, PT, or SLP to observe a class or student to determine if an assessment screening is appropriate. Parents must be informed and grant permission for an individual screening. If the results of the screening indicate that the student would benefit from therapy, a parent needs to grant permission for the service to begin.

Student Information Sheets and Emergency Transportation

Each year, student information sheets need to be updated. These information sheets have basic student information (address, name of parents, etc.). It is important to update your information throughout the school year as changes occur. Particularly important are changes in phone numbers, changes in emergency closing plans (where a student should go in the event of an early dismissal, school closing and no parent will be home), and medical information changes, especially allergies and changes in health conditions, and/or doctors.

It is the policy of this administration to ask for all unlisted phone numbers. At no time will these unlisted numbers be made public. Teachers will have access to these numbers.

Student Rights

The Board of Education believes that all students have a right to equal access to all educational programs even if you have a disability. That also goes for our sports program. There is equal access to all sports for both male and female students. Voluntown Elementary School does not discriminate on any basis against students, parents, or employees.

Substance Abuse Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Education to prevent and prohibit the possession, use and distribution of any drug or drug paraphernalia, alcohol or tobacco products on school property, at school sponsored events, on school buses en route to and from school by any mode of travel provided by the school system. Violation of this policy will result in suspension from school and may result in an expulsion hearing before the Board of Education and legal action. Activities of a questionable nature that mimic or simulate drug use, possession, or distribution are similarly of serious concern and will be treated in the same manner as any substance abuse issue. Smoking is prohibited on school property.

Transition Plan to Full Day Kindergarten

The transition process begins when students are enrolled in the preschool/school readiness program. A preschool teacher visits all new students at their home before they start school. Information about early childhood education is distributed to help with the transition into school. In addition, all preschool students and their parents attend an orientation at school. This is held in small groups on one of two days during the first two days of school. During orientation, students and parents take an initial, bus ride and spend time in the preschool classrooms. They are given a tour of the early childhood wing and given opportunities to meet all faculty/staff.

To further build a partnership with all members of the early childhood wing, our classrooms participate in various activities summarized below:

- Parents are given communication envelopes each Friday that contain newsletters and other important information.
- Attend PTO sponsored events together.
- Close proximity of classrooms in the early childhood wing.
- Shared location and materials for outdoor large motor activities.
- Teachers meet as needed to collaborate and discuss best practice in early childhood education.
- Parent activities are planned to include Preschool/School Readiness and Kindergarten families.

Transition to Kindergarten Activities (for students who will be eligible for K the following school year)

- September – Students get together
- October – Fall festival
- November – Students get together
- December – Multicultural holiday celebration
- January – Students get together
- February – Students get together
- March – Students get together
- April – Spring celebration
- May – Moving up to kindergarten visit
- June – Moving up to kindergarten visit

The purpose of the PK/K teacher/classroom exchange is to allow the Kindergarten teacher opportunities to meet the students of the following year, while in their current environment as well as to allow the students an opportunity to become familiar with the teacher and the K classroom, when the exchange is held in that room.

The registration process for those families that are part of the PreSchool/Readiness Program is simplified in that all records and registration information remains in the student file from the previous year. These records remain in the office in a locked drawer.

Parents are welcome to meet with the Kindergarten teacher individually, prior to the start of the school, if they so desire.

Truancy Law – State of Connecticut

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF PARENTAL OBLIGATIONS UNDER C.G.S. 10184

Connecticut law requires that annually the school district provide you a written notice of your obligations under Connecticut General Statute 10184. This law requires each parent or guardian of a child five years of age and older and under seventeen years of age to ensure that the child attends school regularly when school is in session — unless such parent or other person shows that the child is receiving equivalent instruction elsewhere, or that the child has graduated from high school. The parent or person having control of a child sixteen or seventeen years of age must consent to such child's withdrawal from school by signing a withdrawal form at the school district office.

Regular student attendance is essential to the educational process. So we can inform you if your child is absent without a previous explanation, Connecticut laws also require that we obtain from you a telephone number or other means of contacting you during the school day. A form has been sent home at the beginning of the school year for you to complete and return to the school office.

Under Connecticut State law, there is a truancy procedure, which requires us to keep exact records of all tardiness and absences, which are unexcused. Any student (K-12) who is absent from school and is unexcused for more than 10 days any academic year will have a summons issued for the parents to appear in state court on truancy charges. (This does not apply to students who are emancipated minors or have reached the age of 18 before the 10th unexcused absence occurred.)

Vandalism

Willful destruction of school property will not be tolerated. According to Board of Education Policy, destruction of school property by students becomes the parents' financial responsibility. Administrators may withhold transcripts, report cards, and grades until damages are paid to the school.

Visitors to School

We have a security system in place to keep our students and faculty safe at all times. When visitors arrive at VES, they will be buzzed in/given access into the building. Upon entering the school, visitors must report directly to the main office. At the front office you will be asked the purpose of your visit and will need to show your driver's license or picture identification.

Parents and other visitors are welcome to visit school if it has been arranged with the child's classroom teacher and approved by administration. Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time (8:50AM to 3:20PM) are prohibited because it interferes with the delivery of instruction or disrupts the normal school environment.

Unauthorized persons shall not be permitted in school buildings or on school grounds. The principal is authorized to take appropriate action to prevent such persons from entering the building or from loitering on the grounds. Such persons will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct. Disruptive behavior will not be permitted.

Volunteers

All parents/guardians interested in volunteering at VES must completed a DCF Authorization Form and have a brief orientation with the Administration to go through school policies and safety procedures. Once completed and after the classroom teacher agrees to the volunteer match, you may begin assisting at VES. Volunteers are to be accompanied by or work under the direct supervision of a qualified staff member at all times. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. We are trying to make VES as safe as possible!

Weapons/Threats of Violence

Students in possession of any weapon or issuing threats of any kind to anyone shall be reported to the principal immediately for referral to the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) for review. Police must be notified of weapons in accordance with Connecticut state law.

Website/Social Media Pages

Our school website, www.voluntownct.org, contains important information about our school system. Teacher web pages can be accessed through our school website. School web pages/social media pages must contain material that reflects an educational purposes. School web pages/social media pages are not to be used for personal, commercial or political purposes; and are considered a publication of the Board of Education. The Principal or designee will approve all material posted on the school's web page/social media pages. Students maintaining personal web pages/social media pages may be subject to disciplinary action for the content of such sites under certain conditions.

Important dates and events are listed on the school website at www.voluntownct.org or on our Facebook page. Teacher web pages contain homework, classwork and curricular information along and upcoming field trips, meetings, school calendar and more.

Teachers use a program called *PowerSchool* for record keeping and grading purposes. In 5th-8th grade, a username and password is given to all parents/guardians to access information about their child's grades and performance. Parents may login through the parent portal on the school website. We strongly encourage all parents/guardians to access this information on a regular basis.

The school plans to post student work, student newsletters, and other activities on our Internet web page – www.voluntownct.org or our Facebook account. We suggest you visit both sites to receive information.

A *special sign-off sheet* has been distributed with this handbook for a parent or guardian to grant or not grant permission to publish work on the website which may also include a picture of the student. If we do not receive any communication from you, we will assume we do not have your permission to include your child's name and published work on our web page.

Wellness Committee

Our Board of Education established a Wellness Committee, which will be meeting to review issues related to nutrition and physical activity. Our district still allows food-oriented fundraisers, cupcakes for school celebrations, etc., but encourages the use of healthy foods. The Wellness Committee will take time to meet to

research and review ways to encourage healthy foods and increased physical activity. Any new changes will be developed and recommended by the Wellness Committee and then submitted to the Board of Education for consideration.

Withdrawal from School

If a student is moving out of district, your parents must notify the office before school records can be forwarded to your new school.