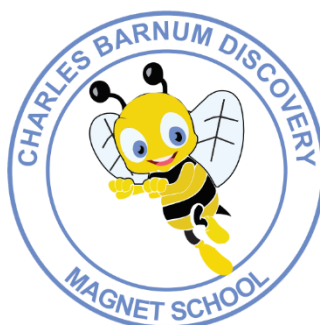


GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2023 - 2024

Elementary School Handbook



Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School

Charles Barnum Discovery Magnet School

Mystic River Active Exploration Magnet School

Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School

Thames River Environmental and Marine Science Magnet School

The Groton Board of Education meets on the second, third, and fourth Monday of each month. Please check our website at www.grotonschools.org for location of meeting.

GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Contact Board of Education members through the Central Office
1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355
860-572-2100
board-of-ed@groton.k12.ct.us

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Constantine Antipas
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GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

Groton Public Schools is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. It is the policy of the Groton Board of Education that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against under any program, including employment, on the basis of sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, handicap, ancestry, physical or mental disability, or lack of proficiency in the English language.

Inquiries regarding Groton Public Schools' nondiscrimination policies should be directed to Dr. Philip Piazza, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, at Groton Public Schools' Administrative Offices, 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or (860) 572-2175. Any person having inquiries concerning Groton Public Schools' compliance with Title IX or Section 504 should contact Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, at Groton Public Schools' Administrative Offices, 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or (860) 572-2150.

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APPENDIX

2023-2024 School Calendar

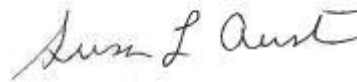
Dear Students and Parents:

The Groton Public Schools is committed to excellence in its academic programs and services which it provides to its students. The school district recognizes that each child is unique. Meeting the many diverse needs presented by our students is a challenge which the Groton Public Schools accepts enthusiastically.

In partnership with parents, we will ensure that all children will learn, and that they will grow up to be contributing citizens within our democratic society.

It is our hope and expectation that each of our students will experience a successful school year.

Sincerely,



Susan L. Austin
Superintendent of Schools

Communication is the key to understanding.

Elementary Schools – Building Administrators

Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School

500 Poquonnock Road
Groton, CT 06340
860-449-5608
Christine Dauphinais, Principal
Daniel Vanasse, Assistant Principal

Charles Barnum Discovery Magnet School

68 Briar Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340
860-449-5640
Seth Danner, Principal
Christina Post, Assistant Principal

Mystic River Active Exploration Magnet School

160 Fishtown Road
Mystic, CT 06340
860-980-8300
Steven Wheeler, Principal
Paul DiPadua, Assistant Principal
Shira Sabo, Assistant Principal

Northeast Academy Arts Magnet School

115 Oslo Street
Mystic, CT 06355
860-572-5852
Ryan Chaney, Principal
Stephanie Wheeler, Assistant Principal

Thames River Environmental & Marine Science Magnet School

250 Brandegee Avenue
Groton, CT 06340
860-980-8230
Jamie Giordano, Principal
Ada Allen, Assistant Principal
Amber Monahan, Assistant Principal

PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of our schools is to develop each student to his/her fullest capacity and to create in him/her the desire to make the most of him/herself for his/her own good and the good of others. To this end, our schools should provide opportunities for total development, for academic and vocational education, and for personal and social growth so that each student will come to understand him/herself in relation to his/her environment.

It is our belief that many organizations should assist in the education of our youth. The school should be an integral part of a program of development which includes the family as well as social and private organizations.

Although the basic function of the school is to encourage and provide for academic learning, it must assume responsibility in providing its youth with experiences that develop initiative, healthful growth, and moral values along with a better understanding of themselves and their obligations as citizens. We will foster respect for all groups of people and an awareness of the responsibilities and rights of the individual.

Within the Groton Public School System there should be individualized instruction and sufficient flexibility in program and methodology to achieve individualization for each student through a sequential program of learning. Students may need periodic intervention, extra assistance or an extension of a classroom activity. This help may be provided in the classroom or in another location within the school by staff members other than their classroom teacher. Staff, parents and students are encouraged to propose innovative programs consistent with recognized, sound, education practices.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support or PBIS involves a proactive and comprehensive continuum of support designed to provide opportunities for all students to achieve social, behavioral, and learning success. Through the PBIS initiative, a leadership team in each school develops a framework to support student behavior at the individual, classroom, and school-wide level. This framework is then established with the entire school community to create procedures for teaching positive expectations, routines, and behaviors and strategies to discourage inappropriate behavior. Students with behavioral concerns receive increased positive support through behavioral interventions, which focus on the teaching and reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and social skills development. There are greater opportunities for student success when students have clearly defined expectations that are taught and reinforced. The set of clearly stated positive expectations and behaviors are posted throughout the school and in each classroom for quick, easy reference. These postings usually display the school's unique logo or mascot to increase school spirit. Individual, classroom, and school-wide incentives as well as positive contacts and communications with families are provided to encourage and recognize appropriate behavior. PBIS improves the overall climate of the school community and involves parents as partners, while improving student academic success.

Parent Involvement

A child's educational success is a partnership shared by school and family, including all those who play an important role in the child's well-being. Student achievement increases when families are active in the learning process. Educators recognize and acknowledge the family's role as the primary facilitator of their children's education.

Families are welcome in all Groton schools. Their support and assistance are actively sought in their child's social, emotional, and academic development. Please refer to the Volunteer Policy.

Parent involvement programs in our schools support and respect family responsibilities and diversity, as well as link parents to programs and resources within the community. All families will be provided opportunities for involvement.

Family and school communications are two-way, regular, meaningful, and respectful. Effective communication requires that both the family and the school initiate contact and provide vital information about a child's strengths, challenges, and accomplishments.

School Visitations

Students are not allowed to have visitors in school during normal school hours except when granted special permission from a school administrator who has been given one full day's notice. Once permission has been granted, all visitors must enter the school using the doors at the main lobby. All school doors are locked; visitors requesting entrance must ring the buzzer on the school's PA/Camera and speak with an administrator. Once the request for access has been validated, the administrator will unlock the doors. All visitors must then report to the school's main office, present identification as needed, and obtain a Visitor's badge which must be displayed on their upper torso while they are on school property. Upon departure, all badges must be returned to the main office.

PTO/PTA

The Groton Board of Education believes that parent-school collaboration is essential to providing the best learning environment for our children. Participation in parent/teacher organizations is one of the best ways to support your child's education. All schools have active PTO/PTA organizations and participate in a town-wide parent organization. Many PTO's are developing parent volunteer programs and your participation is encouraged.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Language Arts

Language Arts consists of the elements of reading, writing, language, and spelling incorporated in an integrated, balanced approach. The purpose of the Groton Public Schools' Language Arts program is to provide experiences that develop communication strategies which increase in complexity in relation to the individual student's abilities. These strategies integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. The program provides opportunities for students to become active and independent, lifelong users of the language.

Reading

The Groton Public Schools' Developmental Reading Program is consciously directed toward specific ends which are: rich and varied experiences through reading; broadening interests in reading; enjoyment through reading; curiosity concerning the ideas given in reading material; resourcefulness in using reading to satisfy one's purpose; and growth in the fundamental reading skills. It provides varied instruction and flexible requirements as a means of adjusting to the different reading needs of pupils. It provides for evaluation of the program and for such revisions as necessary. The developmental reading program encompasses student learning objectives designed to enable all students to progress to levels of reading proficiency in accordance with their levels of potential ability.

Writing

In keeping with its program philosophy and definition, the Groton Public School System's Language Arts Curriculum encourages the utilization of process writing. Research indicates that the most effective way to teach writing is to teach it as a process of prewriting, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, and sharing/publishing.

Writers need regular periods of time, ownership of topic, and responses from peers and teacher. Writers learn mechanics in context, although these skills must be taught directly. They need to know adults who write, to work in an environment that encourages risk-taking, and to write for a purpose.

Spelling

In the primary grades, spelling will be taught through daily mental training in the utilization of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic processes; all essential skills for good spelling. Spelling skills will also be taught within the context of student writing at the editing stage. Spelling evolves through a development process.

Analysis of spelling in student writing will assist in meeting individual needs of students as they progress through each stage. Spelling is taught in the content areas as well.

Handwriting

The handwriting program instructs students how to write letters and numbers with legibility, speed, and ease. Printing (manuscript) and cursive writing are introduced and developed in the elementary grades.

Art

The elementary art program is created by teachers whose expertise arises from a versatile and dynamic background of specialties. These areas include drawing, painting, ceramics, puppetry, costume and scene design, sculpture, mask-making, and papercraft.

These media are presented to inform students about the basic elements of art – line, shape, form, space, color, light, and texture. Children are encouraged to draw upon their own imaginations as well as to appreciate the great masters of art history.

In utilizing a varied selection of art materials, children learn to use such principles as balance, rhythm, variety, contrast, emphasis, harmony, and movement.

Mathematics

The rapid advances in knowledge and technology occurring in our society mandate that we prepare our children to become mathematically literate individuals. Children need to understand the complexities and technologies of the information age in which we live.

Towards that goal, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has developed a set of curriculum evaluation standards for school mathematics. These standards require a fundamental shift from emphasis on rote learning for mastery of skills to the use of conceptual understanding in real life problem solving situations.

The goal of the mathematics curriculum in Groton is based on the NCTM standards and is designed to create powerful young mathematicians who will:

1. Learn to value mathematics.
2. Become confident in their abilities to do mathematics.
3. Become mathematical problem solvers.
4. Learn to communicate mathematically.
5. Learn to reason mathematically.

Increased use of technology including calculators, computer software, and Internet access enrich the quality of the program.

Science

The elementary Science curriculum is a comprehensive program which reflects National Science Standards and the Connecticut State Department of Education Science Frameworks. The content of the program includes yearly study in the specific areas of physical, life, and earth science. Instructional strategies include a rich assortment of hands-on activities to actively engage students in the learning process. Exploration provides opportunities for students to develop questions that require interpretation and conclusions. Students apply what they learn and connect it to data found in charts, graphs, and tables. Inquiry is central to the science program. Instruction is exploratory and cooperative. The infusion of hands-on materials enriches the quality of the program.

Social Studies

The purpose of social studies is to gain a better understanding of people and the way they live. The study of the past, as well as the present and future, is essential to this understanding. Prentice-Hall, along with other materials, is used to teach the areas of geography, history, economics, sociology, and government as they relate to the following grade level focus areas:

- Grade K – Self awareness
- Grade 1 – Families
- Grade 2 – Neighborhood/Communities
- Grade 3 – Connecticut
- Grade 4 – U.S. Regions
- Grade 5 – U.S. Neighbors: Canada and Latin America

Health

Seven areas regarding health and safety are covered in grades K-5. These areas are Safety and First Aid, Mental Health, Nutrition, Addictive Substances, Growth and Development and Diseases and Disorders. We also offer AIDS Education and Sexual Harassment Education as required by Connecticut Education Law. Parents may exclude their child from specific curriculum units by written request.

The primary emphasis of the elementary health curriculum is to encourage students to make wise decisions based upon the information presented, and to accept the responsibility for protecting their own health. The drug abuse prevention program utilizes HLAY 200 (Here's Looking At You 2000 materials) in grades K-4 and DARE (the Dare Abuse Resistance Education) in grade 5.

Physical Education

The Physical Education program strives to develop the skills of movement (basic skills), the knowledge of how and why one moves, and the relationships involved in movement. The ways in which students may express their own movements are through gymnastics, sports, games, dance, and rhythms. Fitness and sportsmanship are also part of the program.

Music

The elementary general music curriculum provides many opportunities for each child to become involved in music. Multi-sensory experiences are provided which include singing, listening, playing instruments, moving to music, reading, writing, and creating music. Fourth and fifth grade chorus provides

enriched experiences in part singing for upper elementary children. In addition, students have the opportunity to engage in one or more performances including concerts, musicals, or ensembles.

Formal instrumental music lessons begin at the fourth grade and are continued through fifth grade with a comprehensive method textbook. Third grade instrumental students are introduced to the recorder, a medieval wind instrument. All students who take instrumental lessons are provided with an opportunity to perform in a school band.

Orchestra is another way for students to become involved in music. Students may choose to play the violin, viola, cello, or string bass. String instruction begins at the elementary level and continues through high school. Lessons are scheduled within the school day and follow a comprehensive method. All children who study a string instrument are provided with the opportunity to perform a variety of styles of music in a wide variety of settings.

The music department has incorporated computerized composition and performance software into the teaching and learning of music.

Library Media Programs

Groton's school library media centers are an integral part of every school's program and are staffed by certified media specialists, with library technical assistants as support staff. From collections of books, magazines, audiovisual, video and computer materials, students can obtain information which supplements the curriculum, which broadens personal interests, and which assists them in their research.

The media centers have truly become information technology centers. Each center is fully automated, with an electronic circulation and on-line catalog system. Students and staff have full access to the Internet, as well as to extensive CD-ROM titles. They receive instruction in how to search electronic on-line data bases and CD-ROM reference tools.

Students utilize the library media centers for skills instruction, individual or small group research, book selection, storytelling and leisure reading. It is the department's mission to provide experiences that develop skills which enable students to access, evaluate, locate and communicate information, unimpeded by social, cultural, economic, and geographic constraints.

Information & Telecommunications Technology Program

The converging technologies of voice, video, and data are utilized in all curriculum areas, at all grade levels. Computer software is available for the teaching of various application programs, while computer courseware titles in all subject areas are integrated into curriculum implementation. In all classrooms, students and staff have full Internet access through our school system's local area and wide area networks. Staff members communicate via e-mail and the Groton Public Schools web site. There is a minimum of one multimedia computer in every elementary school classroom.

Internet Use

Computers are provided in every classroom to equip our students with the anticipated technical skills to compete in today's world of information and technology. Prior to receiving authorization to use the Internet, students and their parents/guardians must sign a "Permission and Contract" document provided by the school district. Use of the Internet is a privilege, and all students must abide by the Groton Board of Education "Internet Use Policy and Procedures" to assure it is used appropriately and responsibly.

Homework

Research evidence indicates a positive correlation between homework, student performance, and achievement. Regular homework will be assigned to students. Homework assignments should:

- be related to classroom instruction;
- be age and developmentally appropriate;
- provide reinforcement and enrichment of classroom instruction which can be independently completed by the student;
- emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, and written expression;
- emphasize quality over quantity;
- be reviewed/assessed once submitted;
- contribute to the evaluation of the student's performance.

Homework should be relevant and instructionally sound and should not be used for disciplinary purposes. It should be noted that, on occasion, individual students may have to complete unfinished classroom work in addition to the regularly scheduled homework assignments.

The following homework procedures have been developed for grades PreK-5:

Gr. PreK, K - Daily reading with parent or guardian.

Gr. 1 - 15 minutes of daily reading, plus 10 minutes of other homework activities, not more than 3 times per week.

Gr. 2 - 5 minutes of daily reading, plus 15 minutes of other homework activities, not more than 3 times per week.

Gr. 3 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 20 minutes of other homework activities, 2 to 4 times per week.

Gr. 4 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 30 minutes of other homework activities, 3 to 5 times per week.

Gr. 5 - 20 minutes of daily reading, plus not more than 45 minutes of other homework activities, 3 to 5 times per week.

Students may work on extended/long-term assignments during weekends and other designated periods of time including school breaks during the school year.

Reporting System

The evaluation of student progress is based upon end of the year grade level expectations listed in our curricula (located in the Library/Media Center). Each discipline is represented by instructional objectives which are described in the grade level curriculum manual. Separate report cards will be used for each grade level.

Your child's progress is reported three times during the year – December, March, and June. Conferences are held twice a year. In each marking period, parents will receive a cumulative copy of the report card.

Promotion

Students shall be placed by the certified staff at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially, and emotionally. Students will normally progress annually from grade to grade. Exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the certified staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the students involved. The Board of Education recognizes that retention in grade, most often, is not – in the long term – in the best interest of the student. Retention, therefore, shall not be determined on a standards-based policy. Retention in grade may be made on an individual basis for compelling reasons based on data indicating that such a decision may benefit a specific child.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

Special Education Instruction

The Planning and Placement Teams (PPT) in each of our schools ensure that students meet the eligibility requirements of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state regulations. It is also through the PPT process that the district ensures that all students with disabilities aged 3 through 21 who require special education and related services, who have not graduated with a regular high school diploma, receive a free and appropriate public education. The district develops a written plan for each student requiring special education and related services. This plan is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP is developed, implemented, maintained, reviewed, revised, and evaluated for all students served by our district.

The district ensures that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are nondisabled. However, the district provides a continuum of programming options for students to the extent necessary in order to implement the IEP. Each student requiring special education and related services is educated in the school that he or she would attend if he or she did not require special education and related services, unless the IEP requires another placement.

The Integrated Preschool Special Needs Programs are designed to provide quality preschool programming as well as special education services to 3, 4, and 5 year old children in Groton. Special education and related services are provided to preschool children identified by the PPT as having a disability in accordance with their IEP. The programs also enroll typically developing peers to serve as role models for preschool children with disabilities. All preschool age children who are suspected of having a disability are screened and, if necessary, evaluated by the Early Childhood Assessment Team (ECAT) to determine eligibility for special education and related services.

Related Services

The following services are available in each school:

Social Work and Psychological Services are provided by certified school psychologists and certified school social workers who provide a range of services including support for all students and consultation and collaboration with educators, professionals and parents. School Social workers and school psychologists work collaboratively with teacher and administrators to help create safe and supportive school environments, empower teachers to understand and respond to students' social and emotional needs, develop and monitor academic and behavioral interventions to enable students to attain educational goals and persona-social well-being, and coordinate community services, outside providers and agency involvement to prevent problems, enhance independence and promote optimal learning.

School Psychologists conduct individual assessments to provide information that is helpful in determining a student's eligibility for special education and related services and in the development of individual academic and behavioral programs which maximize the student's achievement and education success.

Speech and Language Services are provided by certified speech and language pathologists to students who exhibit speech-language impairments that adversely affect educational performance in accordance with the IEP. Speech and language pathologists participate in the development and monitoring of alternative procedures and programs in general education which may be explored and implemented, where appropriate, before a child is referred to special education. When concerns about a child's communication development continue despite the implementation of alternative interventions, speech and language pathologist conduct

individual assessments to provide information that is helpful in determining a child's eligibility for speech and language services as special education or a related service.

Physical and Occupational Therapy are provided in accordance with the student's IEP.

Special Education Transportation is provided as a related service in accordance with the student's IEP.

Homebound Instruction is provided for students who receive special education and related services when recommended by the PPT in accordance with the student's IEP. Homebound instruction is also provided for any student for whom a physician has certified, in writing, that the student's medical condition will cause an absence of at least three weeks' duration. Instruction typically begins no later than two weeks from the first day of absence.

Early Intervention Prior to Referral to Special Education - Before school personnel refer a student to a Planning and Placement Team (PPT), alternative strategies and programs in general education are explored and where appropriate, implemented. Despite additional supports, a small number of children still may not make adequate progress in developing targeted skills. They may cause a family or a teacher to suspect that a child may have a disability, prompting a request for an evaluation to determine whether a child may require special education.

The Scientific Research-Based Intervention or SRBI process, involves providing students with high-quality instruction and interventions that are matched to student needs, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying data to inform education decisions. SRBI is a multi-tiered, layered instructional approach that aims to prevent learning impediments and behavioral problems first, and then brings increasingly intense interventions to students who continue to experience difficulty. The primary goal of SRBI is improving academic and behavioral outcomes for all students by eliminating discrepancies between actual and expected performances. Instructional decisions are made by school based teams and focused on determining the extent to which the student is responding to the interventions based on a review of data that is collected over time.

SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM SERVICES

VNA of Southeastern CT provides the school nursing service for the Groton Schools. An on-site professional registered nurse is responsible for carrying out the many activities of the school health program. The professional registered nurse is assisted by school health aides in specific areas. The goal of the school health program is to assist each child to attain and maintain his/her optimum state of health so that he/she may benefit to the maximum degree from his/her education experiences. The means of accomplishing this goal are to reduce the obstacles to learning caused by poor health and to contribute to education in healthful living.

Health Requirements for Registration

The Groton Board of Education, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statute (Section 10-204A), requires that the required immunizations be documented by submission of a record at the time of registration.

Immunization record or proof of immunity to certain diseases must be confirmed in writing by a physician or by lab confirmation. Parents or guardians may check the specifics of the required immunizations by contacting their child's pediatrician, the school nurse, or the school nurse supervisor at 860-444-1111.

According to Connecticut State Statute (Public Act 80-449; An Act Concerning School Health), all students are required to have a health assessment and mandated immunizations prior to public school enrollment.

Military students who do not have proof of an updated physical examination and/or immunization records upon registering for school will have 30 school days from the first day the student attends school to submit all necessary documentation to the school nurse. Military students will be subject to exclusion from school if the health requirements are not met within the 30 school day grace period.

Medical exemptions must be accompanied by a physician's note and a religious exemption must be accompanied by a written statement from the parent/guardian.

Each medical record will be reviewed by school nursing staff and verification will be made as to compliance with State Statute. This information will be transferred to a permanent health record and should be kept current by notifying the school nurse when your child receives updated immunizations and physical examinations.

The required immunizations are as follows:

1. DTP/DTaP/TD
2. Polio
3. Hemophilus Influenza Type B (HIB)
4. Hepatitis B (HBV)
5. Measles, Rubella & Mumps (MMR)
6. Varicella
7. Pneumococcal
8. Influenza
9. Hepatitis A

Health Services Offered

The school nurse is available for counseling in these situations:

1. **Illness** – Counsels students, contacts parents as necessary.
2. **First Aid** – Administers first aid and emergency care as needed.
3. **Immunization Clinics** – Information regarding clinics can be obtained from the school nurse.
4. **Physical Examinations** – Provided by SBHC with parental permission. Prior to grades 6, 10 and sports activities at the Middle and High Schools.
5. **Scoliosis Screening** – For students in grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
6. **Vision Tests** – For specific grade levels and for anyone who is referred.
7. **Hearing Tests** – For specific grade levels and for anyone who is referred.
8. **Teacher Nurse Conferences.**
9. **Health Education** – Does health education sessions on varying subjects in the classroom as a resource person.
10. **Health Counseling Services** – To students, parents, and faculty in relation to health problems.
11. **Home Visits** – Made on behalf of students for varying reasons.
12. **Multi-Disciplinary Team Member** – Works as needed with all professional school personnel to find the appropriate educational program for individual students.

You are encouraged to contact your school nurse with any questions or problems which you may encounter regarding the health of your child.

Physical Examinations

Each pupil enrolled in the public schools is required to have a health examination at periodic intervals. It is required that the first examination be done within the year preceding the child's entrance to school. A health assessment form shall be given to you on the registration day. Physical assessments are required in grade 6 and grade 10. These must be completed prior to that school year or the student will be excluded from school the beginning of the next year. Please refer to the Board policy on Physical Examinations on page 29 of this handbook.

Mandated components of the physical examination are as follows:

1. Hemocrit or hemoglobin test, height, weight and blood pressure; speech upon school entry;
2. Gross dental exam, vision, hearing, scoliosis screening and chronic disease assessment;
3. Immunizations as listed above.

Conferences will be held with the parents or guardian and the school nurse on the day of registration.

TB Testing (PPD)

Skin testing to be done if student falls into certain high-risk groups or at the discretion of the physician.

GENERAL SCHOOL HEALTH INFORMATION

Health Records: An individual cumulative health record is maintained for each child. The information recorded shall consist of a health history filled out by the parent or guardian at the time of registration. Results of ongoing screening tests are also incorporated into the record as they are performed at school. It is imperative that the parent/guardian notify the school nurse if a child has received an update on immunization or has received a physical examination from the family physician. This cooperative effort is extremely beneficial in ensuring effective health care and will prevent supplication of effort.

Health problems may restrict some students from participation in some school activities, such as physical education. In these circumstances, a note from a family physician describing the condition and advising the type and length of restriction is required. Permanent excuses must be renewed at the opening of each school year.

Communicable Disease: If a child is absent due to a diagnosed communicable disease such as chicken pox, please notify the school. When your child has recovered, he/she may be readmitted by the school nurse. In certain cases, such as infectious hepatitis, it may be necessary to have a readmission slip from a physician.

Emergencies: Health care provided in schools is restricted to first aid in accidents and illness. Emergency cards, providing written authorization for further care, as well as names of physicians and other persons to be called in an emergency, should be on file for each child. It is of prime importance that the school be provided with an emergency telephone number in case of a medical emergency or routine illness which requires exclusion. The parent/guardian shall provide the school with an alternate telephone number of a relative, or neighbor, who has agreed to respond when the parent or guardian cannot be reached. This person should live within a reasonable distance from the school and be willing to accept the responsibility of providing transportation so that the child can be picked up at the school. This person will be responsible for your child's care and decisions made in your absence. The school will immediately summon an ambulance in cases of serious emergency.

Medication in the Schools: Students are not allowed to have any type of medications in the school. A physician's written order and parent's or guardian's authorization is required for a nurse or, in her absence, the principal or designee to administer medications. A form is available at each school to be filled out by the prescribing physician and signed by the parent or guardian. This form is returned to the school and kept with the child's health record.

Self-administration of medication will be allowed provided certain criteria are met. In the case of inhalant medications, self-administration may be approved with a prescription from a physician and written parental consent on file.

The medication must be given to the school nurse by the parent or guardian. The medication can then be administered, as prescribed by the school nurse, or in her absence, the principal or designee. These forms must be reviewed at specified intervals.

No more than a 3 month supply of medication can be kept at the school at one time. Parents should pick up any unused medications at the end of the school year or they will be destroyed.

Exclusion: A child can be excluded from school for various illnesses or injuries. The school nurse recommends exclusion to the principal or designee according to the policies set by the school medical advisors and the State Department of Health. Students are also excluded if there is evidence of pediculosis or scabies.

SCHOOL ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE

Kindergarten Registration

Children who are five years of age on or before January 1st will be admitted to Kindergarten. A registration day for children enrolling for the first time in Kindergarten is held in the spring in the office of the school registrar. (When applicable, pre-kindergarten registration admits children four years of age on or before January 1st who qualify.)

Parents of eligible children will receive information regarding registration procedures in the local newspapers or through school initiated notices.

The following information is required when a child is registered for Kindergarten:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Address – proof of residency, lease, utility bill
3. Social Security Number
4. Verification of immunization
5. Physical (required by the 1st day of school)
6. Health History form

Note: At the Kindergarten registration, your child may go through a readiness screening process.

Supplies, Textbooks, Material and Equipment

The school district will purchase such books, supplies, materials, and equipment necessary to meet the needs of instruction in the schools. All books and equipment shall be loaned and materials and supplies furnished to all pupils free of charge.

New Residents

Families who are moving into Groton with school-aged children are required to make an appointment with the School Registrar located at the Central Office. To transfer children to the Groton School District, the following information should be presented to the Central Office Registrar:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Address – proof of residency, lease, utility bill
3. Social Security Number
4. Verification of immunization
5. Physical

Upon receipt of the above information, arrangements will be made by the Groton School District to obtain additional needed student records from the last school attended. Visits to your children's school should be arranged by contacting the school.

School Day Schedule

Children receive a minimum of 5 hours and 30 minutes of instruction each day with the exception of early dismissal days. Two hour early dismissal days are scheduled intermittently throughout the year to allow for parent-teacher conference and teacher in-service meetings.

Elementary School Hours

Grades 1-5: 9:00 am – 3:35 pm
 Full-Day Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 3:35 pm
 AM Pre-Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 11:48 am
 PM Pre-Kindergarten: 12:48 pm – 3:35 pm

Early Dismissals – Weather Related

Grade K-5: 9:00 am – 1:20 pm
 AM Pre-Kindergarten: 9:00 am – 11:08 am
 PM Pre-Kindergarten: No Classes

Planned Early Dismissals (P/T Conf./TLI Days)

Grade K-5: 9:00 am – 1:20 pm
 AM/PM Pre-Kindergarten: See teacher for schedule

Absences

Good daily attendance at school is important to the academic and social growth of children. Occasions do arise, however, when absence from school is warranted and excused. These occasions can be categorized as: illness of the student, death in the immediate family, quarantine, and “exceptional urgent reasons” that may affect the child. The principal will determine what is covered by “exceptional urgent reasons.” In addition, absences will be excused when, as a result of severe weather conditions, a parent or guardian indicates in writing that school attendance would have presented a danger to the health or welfare of the child. All other absences are considered unexcused. If your child is going to be absent, you are asked to call the school that morning.

A child who is absent from school must present, upon return to school or within 10 school days, a note signed by the parent explaining the absence. A note of explanation from a parent is required also when a child arrives late for the beginning of school. Early dismissal also requires a note of explanation no later than the morning of the dismissal.

Students who are tardy should be signed in at the office by the parent/guardian.

It is suggested that parents be aware of the school calendar when planning family vacation trips. Missed work is not provided for students to take with them when they leave for unexcused absence, such as week-long vacations. Students are encouraged to read and keep a journal while they are out.

The Board of Education policy on attendance is provided on page 20 of this handbook.

BUS TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Transportation is provided for elementary school children who reside one (1) mile or more from school (1/2 mile or more for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children). Children residing less than one (1) mile from school will be bused only when a hazardous condition, as defined by the Pupil Transportation Policy of Groton Public Schools, exists along the walking route.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children are to be met by a parent or a designated person at midday and end of the day bus runs or the child will be returned to the school. Please notify your school's principal in writing if you cannot or choose not to follow this procedure. If we do not hear from you in writing, we will follow our procedure as outlined including the return of the child to the school, if warranted.

Crossing Guards

A crossing guard is stationed at hazardous intersections within a reasonable distance of the school. Normally the crossing guard will be on duty when your child is traveling to or from school. The crossing guard is employed and trained by the Police Department. Parents are asked to stress the importance of cooperating with the school safety crossing guard.

Bus Code of Conduct

Bus transportation to school is a privilege available to all students. However, this privilege can be suspended. The bus is an extension of the school and it is expected that proper behavior will prevail. The driver is in FULL charge on the bus, and his/her instructions are to be obeyed. For the student's comfort and safety, he/she must abide by the following:

- Be on time. Buses must meet a schedule.
- Respect personal property while waiting at a stop.
- As the bus approaches, form a single line. Do not move toward the bus until it stops.
- Enter the bus in an orderly manner and take a seat.
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Quiet conversation is encouraged. Do not distract the driver by loud talk or shouting.
- Appropriate language must be used at all times.
- Do not offend pedestrians or passengers in other vehicles by shouting out of windows or making obscene gestures.
- Nothing is to be thrown or tossed within the bus or out of the bus.
- The carrying of weapons or any object that may be used as a weapon on the bus is prohibited by State Law.
- Do not bring cigarettes, matches or lighters to school. Smoking is not allowed.
- Get on and off at a regular stop. Do not request special consideration.
- Pupils who deface the bus will be held liable for its repair. Should you note any damage, report it immediately to the driver.
- Any student who loses the privilege of riding the bus due to misconduct is still required to attend school.
- Students and parents are invited to discuss any bus problem with the principal or assistant principal.
- Students and parents are invited to discuss any bus problem with the principal or assistant principal.

Safety Guidelines

Safety awareness and the prevention of accidents are important safety goals of each school. Parents are urged to assist their children in following these safety guidelines:

- Start for school early enough to arrive without rushing. Plan to be at the school 5-10 minutes before the late bell.
- Walk on the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the road facing oncoming traffic.
- Refuse to approach or enter strange automobiles. Invitations to do so should be reported at home and at school.
- Proceed directly to school or home before beginning to play.
- Be considerate of smaller children.
- Refrain from throwing snowballs on the way to or from school.
- Remain on the school grounds while school is in session.
- Cross streets only after looking carefully in each direction.

Toys/Personal Devices

Devices such as cellular phones, pagers, MP3 players or IPODS, radios, games, laser pointers, etc. are not to be used during the school day. If visible, they will be taken from the student and held until the end of the school day for the first offense. Subsequent violations will result in disciplinary action including devices being taken from the student and held until parents pick them up. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen articles. Therefore, it is recommended that these items not be brought to school.

Video Surveillance

The Board of Education, having carefully weighed and balanced the rights of privacy of students and staff against the district's duty to maintain order and discipline, finds that it is appropriate to provide for the use of video camera surveillance in its transportation vehicles and on school grounds. Video surveillance shall only be used to promote the order, safety and security of students, staff and property.

Weather Emergencies

Schools will be closed when weather conditions make it hazardous to transport children to the assigned schools. Notice of such closing is broadcast on local radio stations beginning at 6:00 a.m. through the School Messenger auto dialing system and on our website www.grotonschools.org. Please listen to the radio or television and check your messages and do not call the school, central office, police or radio stations. NOTE: it is important that your contact number be kept up-to-date with your child/children's school so that you receive all messages.

Should weather conditions develop during the day which would make bus travel dangerous, an early dismissal will be called. To prepare for the possibility of an unplanned early dismissal, it is suggested that parents arrange an alternate place for children to go in the event that no one is at home.

It is also possible that school opening will be delayed 2 hours when it appears that conditions will improve. Selected radio, television stations, School Messenger, and our web site will carry the announcement for "no school" or delayed openings. Normal delayed openings will be 2 hours unless otherwise notified. Tune into any of the following for this information:

WBMW 106.5 FM
WCTY 97.7 FM
WICH 1310 AM
WKNL 100.9 FM
WNLC 98.7 FM
WILI 1400 AM

I98.3 FM
WFSB TV – Channel 3
WTNH TV – Channel 8
WVIT TV – Channel 30
GPS – Channel 19

School Messenger: This is a “phone alert” system. The Superintendent will send messages home or to designated numbers to notify families of delays or cancellations.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire Drill

Fire drills and lockdown drills are conducted during the school year. During a fire drill, students must pass quickly and silently in a single file to the nearest exit as directed by the teacher and remain with their class. Directions for this procedure will be found in each classroom near the exit door. After the drill, students will return to their classes at the direction of the teacher.

Lockdown Drill

For a drill or in the event of an emergency, a code red lockdown may be initiated. When a “code red” is announced, students and school personnel shall go to the nearest classroom, remain outside or remain in another appropriate location until “code green” is announced. Directions for code red are posted near the exit door in all classrooms.

Potassium Iodide Pills

Potassium Iodide (KI) pills are available for all students. In the event of an accident at any of the nearby nuclear reactors, it is possible that radioactive iodine could be released into the atmosphere. Radioactive iodine can be absorbed into the thyroid gland. Potassium iodide, also known by its chemical name “KI”, is an over-the-counter drug that protects the thyroid gland from radioactive iodine. Your child’s school has been stocked with enough KI pills for all staff and students. All parents/guardians are asked to fill out a potassium iodide (KI) student medication authorization form. This form must be filled out only once for the time the student is enrolled at the Groton Public Schools. This form is available from the school nurse.

FOOD SERVICES

The Groton Board of Education offers, where facilities permit, a program of food services as a participant in the National School Lunch Program. Prices may be subject to change by the Groton Board of Education. Free and reduced price lunches and free milk are available to eligible children. A breakfast program is available at all schools. At the beginning of each school year, an application form and explanatory letters are sent to all parents. MyPaymentsPlus.com is available to pay for meals. Benefits of MyPaymentsPlus.com are:

- Speeds up serving lines in the cafeteria, providing more time for students to eat their meals.
- Eliminates the worry of lost or forgotten lunch money.
- Ensures that your student will receive a nutritious meal.

Lunch is not served on designated early dismissal days.

DRESS CODE

School dress may be regulated and students are encouraged to dress in clothing appropriate to the school setting. Restrictions on freedom of expression may be applied whenever the mode of dress is unsafe, disruptive, or contrary to law.

Any school dress which impairs the safety or increases the risk to self or others, causes discomfort to others (e.g. uncleanliness, inappropriate language), causes distraction or disruption of the learning environment, advertises or advocates the use of alcohol or drugs, pornography, or inherently contains unreasonable potential to hurt or upset others, is prohibited.

The following guidelines will be used in judging appropriateness of clothing worn in school:

1. Students must wear foot apparel in school at all times which is appropriate and safe for school. Shoes with laces must be tied.
2. Shoes, or any type of foot apparel, with wheels are not allowed.
3. Clothing and accessories must be free of offensive signs, slogans or language.
4. Underwear worn as outerwear and any clothing that exposes underwear are prohibited.
5. Clothing must be appropriately sized. Pants must be worn at the waist.
6. No hats, bandanas, "do-rags," hoods or any other headwear may be worn in the building.
7. Pajamas and lounge wear are prohibited.
8. Clothing that is deemed by the administration to be too short is prohibited.
9. Final decisions regarding appropriate clothing rest with the administration.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES

The complete text of all Board of Education policies is available for review in each school and in the Central Administrative Office. Selected policies are summarized in this handbook for student and parent information.

Appropriate Use of Technology - (Policy #6141.321)

Groton Public Schools (GPS) provides its students and staff access to a multitude of technology resources with the understanding that these resources provide opportunities to enhance learning and improve communication within our community and with the global community. The advantages of having access to these resources are far greater than the potential difficulties they may bring. However, with the privilege of access comes personal responsibility to use the resources appropriately.

The district's policies are intended to promote the most effective, safe, productive, instructionally sound and honest uses of networked information and communication tools. Students' use of technology at school shall be for educational purposes only. The district makes a good faith effort to protect its students from exposure to Internet materials that are harmful or explicit by maintaining a system of Internet content filtering devices and software controls that meet federal standards established in the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The district also educates students and staff on responsible use of technology including Internet resources and communication tools.

Digital Citizenship

As it supports students to develop the citizenship skills necessary to function in society, Groton Public Schools understands its responsibility to help students develop digital citizenship skills, as the Internet and electronic communication has become ubiquitous in the 21st century. Digital citizenship skills enable students to use information and technology in safe, legal, and responsible ways. Administrators, teachers, and staff are

expected to model good digital citizenship skills for students in the same manner they model all expected behaviors. Students will receive instruction on the concepts and skills involved in digital citizenship.

A responsible digital citizen is one who:

Respects One's Self:

- Users show respect for themselves by understanding online behavior is a reflection and representation of oneself. They select online names that are appropriate, consider the information and images posted online as public expressions of themselves, and do not post personal information.

Respects Others:

- Users show respect for others online. They refrain from using technology to bully, tease, insult, inflame, harass or discriminate and in general, disrespect others. They do not visit sites that are degrading, pornographic, racist or otherwise inappropriate in the school setting. They do not violate others' access to material or others' files, online spaces, or material and never borrow, use or misappropriate another's identity, online password/or another's work product.

Protects One's Self:

- Users protect themselves by not posting any information including images that may put them at risk. They do not post personal details or contact information or otherwise share private information. They report any attacks or inappropriate behavior directed at them or other abuse. They protect passwords, accounts and resources.

Protects Others:

- Users protect others online by not putting others at risk and taking care to not offend others. They report abuse and do not create, forward or disseminate in any manner inappropriate materials, images or communications. Users do not visit degrading, pornographic, racist or other inappropriate sites.

Respects Intellectual Property:

- Users understand online resources are the creation of others. They request permission to use resources as necessary, suitably cite any and all use of websites, books, media, etc. and abide by fair use rules.

Protects Intellectual Property:

- Users adhere to copyright laws and agreements. They seek permission to use the software and media others produce. They act with integrity when dealing with licensed music, software and other media.

Responsibilities

- The user is responsible for all of his/her actions and activities involving technology, including personal portable technology. Examples of user responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:
 - Keeping all school accounts and passwords confidential.
 - Logging on school technology with own user identification and password.
 - Logging off when leaving the computer.
 - Using the computers or other technology with teacher permission and supervision.
 - Taking precautions to prevent viruses.
 - Using permissible personal technology only for educational purposes and in designated areas and at designated times.

Unacceptable Use

- Examples of prohibited conduct include but are not limited to the following:
 - Using the instructional network or Internet access for commercial business, political or religious advocacy purposes, solicitation or illegal activities of any kind.
 - Access or dissemination of obscene or pornographic material.
 - Sending material critical of or which may be offensive or objectionable to others, or using the network or Internet to threaten or harass others.
 - Engaging in cyber bullying
 - Harassing network users, infiltrating computing systems and/or damaging software components.
 - Making any unauthorized entry to or alteration of any document, either paper or electronic, not created by user.
 - Sharing one's account with anyone or leaving account open or unattended.
 - Disclosing personal information about oneself or another student.
 - Subscribing to online services without approval of district staff.
 - Deliberately misusing the network and its peripherals.
 - Installing of software.
 - Intentionally bypassing the network filters.
 - Tampering with the hardware or software or system configuration.
 - Accessing executables from external sources.

Regulations

The Board of Education directs the Superintendent or his designee to develop accompanying regulations to provide specific guidance for students in their use of district technology and personal technology including the use of social media both in and outside of school as well as guidance for staff in their use of technology with students. This guidance shall address staff responsibilities to educate students about appropriate and safe online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms as well as cyberbullying awareness and response.

Consequences for Violation

The Superintendent will set forth in the regulations consequences for violation of this policy, its regulations and other unacceptable use of technology. Such consequences may include revocation of privileges, disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from school, and/or legal action. The Groton Board of Education reserves the right to cooperate with law enforcement officers in investigations related to illegal activities conducted by students in their use of technology.

Student Conduct - (Policy #5131)

Parents - Parents shall be expected to cooperate with school authorities regarding the behavior of their children. Parents shall be held responsible for the willful and chronic misbehavior of their children.

Students – Students shall be properly instructed in rules and regulations of acceptable conduct; they shall then be responsible for understanding and complying with the standards of behavior described herein. Any student who fails to comply with these rules and regulations concerning student behavior is liable to suspension, in-school suspension, or expulsion.

Attendance - (Policy #5113)

The Groton Board of Education recognizes that regular attendance in school is fundamental to a child's achievement. Instructional experiences that occur in school are meaningful and essential components of the learning process. Time lost from class is irretrievable. It shall be the policy of the Groton Public Schools to encourage regular, daily attendance by all students.

Connecticut State Board of Education policy states that, *"A student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., a field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent."* According to this policy, a student who is not "in attendance" is considered absent.

In order to identify those students who are chronically absent and at risk of becoming truant and to provide clear guidance to school districts for complying with truancy laws and reporting student truancy statistics, the State Board of Education has adopted the following definitions and guidance regarding student absences:

Disciplinary Absences – Absences that are the result of school or District-level disciplinary action (e.g., out-of-school suspension and expulsion) are excluded from State-level accounting and will not be counted against the student for the purpose of this policy.

Excused Absences – A student's absence from school shall be considered excused if written documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school, or the absence is in accordance with section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (exclusion for medical reasons), and student's absence meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences one through nine (1-9), a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence, regardless of the reason, and submits appropriate documentation; and
- B. For the tenth and subsequent absences, a student's absences are considered excused for the following reasons:
 - 1. Student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional for the absence to be excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
 - 2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
 - 3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - 4. Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
 - 5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a school district other than Groton (no parental documentation is required for this reason); and
 - 6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the Principal, or his/her designee, per the guidance in this policy.

Unexcused Absences – A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless it meets the definition of an excused absence (including the documentation requirements) or the absence was a disciplinary absence.

Note that the State Board of Education's policy only considers a student absent when he/she misses half or more of the normal school day. A student missing less than half the school day will be considered tardy; student tardiness shall be dealt with at the school building level.

Documentation of Student Absences

The State Board of Education requires careful and thorough documentation of all student absences. Parent or guardian notes and other documentation are central to determining whether a student's absence is excused or unexcused. While a written note from a parent or guardian will likely be the most common form of documentation, other methods of reporting a student's absence are acceptable, such as a parent/guardian making a report in person to the designated school staff member, through an online system with controlled access, or via video chat. E-mail and texting do not meet the State's security requirements; however, e-mail may be used to deliver a scanned image of a note.

The school staff must be certain that the student's parent/guardian was the one providing the information regarding the student's absence in order for it to be excused should the absence meet all the applicable criteria specified herein.

School staff must receive or generate documentation for each instance of absence, which is one or more consecutive school days absent. Schools should only accept notes covering a series of absences for non-consecutive school days if the absences share a common cause.

Once a student has accrued a total of none (9) absences, including both excused and unexcused, additional documentation (besides the note from the student's parent/guardian) is required in order for absences resulting from illness or mandated court appearances to be excused:

- A. Students missing school for mandated court appearances must provide additional documentation such as a policy summons, a subpoena, a notice to appear, or a signed note from a court official.
- B. For absences resulting from illness, students must either provide a signed note from a medical professional who has evaluated the student confirming the absence and giving an expected return date or have the school nurse verify the student's absence with the medical professional treating the student. Families who lack health insurance and/or those with limited means may find it challenging to meet this requirement to obtain a note from a licensed medical professional. In these cases, school nurses can evaluate the ill student, either in person or over the telephone, and, where appropriate, provide the required documentation for an excused absence.

For parents/guardians who are not proficient in reading and writing English, the schools shall make efforts to help these parents report their child's absences, including accepting notes in languages other than English. For parents who are not proficient in writing in any language, schools should verbally inform them of the attendance requirements and that they may report a student's absence in person at the school.

Absences for Emergency Situations

For the purposes of the definition of excused absences, emergencies are generally significant events that are outside of the control of the student's family. They are normally short absences consisting of a few days at most. The only required documentation is a parental note clearly explain the emergency situation that result in the student's absence. Examples of emergencies include, but are not limited to:

- Family member who is very ill and close to dying;
- Student's home is lost to fire or eviction;
- Family's home being quarantined;
- Natural disaster;
- A student who is a parent and whose child needs to go to the hospital; or
- A family member's military deployment or return from deployment.

Absences for Extraordinary Educational Opportunities

From time to time, students may be presented with an exceptional opportunity for an experience of an educational nature. While these events may not be part of the student's normal schoolwork, they can provide an excellent chance to further their education. Students and their parents/guardians must understand that approval as an excused absence is made on a case-by-case basis, in consideration of a number of factors, and that opportunities approved for one student may not be approved for another. Under the specific criteria outline herein, the days devoted to these opportunities can count as excused absences:

- The opportunity must be education in nature and have a learning objective related to the student's coursework or plan of study;
- It must be an opportunity not ordinarily available to the student;
- It must be grade and developmentally appropriate; and
- The content of the experiences must be highly relevant to the student.

It is important that the school administration, the student, and the student's family all have a common understanding of the extraordinary educational opportunity that is being requested and approved. To that end, building-specific procedures implementing this policy shall include the following:

- All requests for approval of an exceptional educational opportunity as an excused absence must be submitted in writing prior to the event, bear the signature of the student and his/her parent or guardian, describe the learning objective of the opportunity, and detail how the objective is linked to the student's coursework or plan of study; include additional documentation as appropriate to support a full understanding of the opportunity.
- Approval of an exceptional educational opportunity as an excused absence should be in writing, detail any requirements placed upon the student as a condition of approval, include the specific days approved for the opportunity, and include the caveat that the school administration may withdraw its approval if the opportunity is canceled or the student fails to meet the mutually-agreed-upon requirements of the approval.

Within ten (10) days after the end of the approved period for the extraordinary educational opportunity, the student must submit all required documentation as specified during the approval process, or the time away from school will be considered an unexcused absence.

Truancy

Connecticut State law defines a "truant" as a child age five to eighteen years, inclusive, who is enrolled in Groton Public Schools and has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year. Studies have shown that students who are truant are in danger of having significant difficulty in making the same academic progress as their peers who regularly attend school.

Within ten (10) school days after a student's fourth (4th) unexcused absence in a month or tenth (10th) unexcused absence in a school year, the school administration shall hold a meeting with the parent/guardian of the student who has become truant, or with such other person having control of the truant student, to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being truant.

If the truant student's parent/guardian, or other person having control of the truant student, fails to attend the required meeting or if such parent/guardian or other person otherwise fails to cooperate with the school administration in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the school administration will refer to recommendations from the Tiered Intervention document.

(See regulations and addendum.)

Investigating Student Absences

The Superintendent is authorized by the Board to designate one or more District employees to serve as an attendance officer for the purpose of investigating student absences. The role of an attendance officer is to gather/verify information so that school personnel may better understand the factors contributing to the student's absenteeism. This may include a visit to the student's residence.

When a principal believes that a student's absences, excused or not, are having a negative impact on the student's academic performance and that more information is needed regarding the factors behind the student's absenteeism, the principal shall recommend to the Superintendent that an attendance officer be assigned to further investigate the situation. Only the Superintendent, or her/his designee, may authorize the use of an attendance office in Groton Public Schools.

Implementation

The Superintendent is responsible for the development of District-wide and building-specific procedures to implement the requirements of this policy. All elementary schools shall use a common procedure regarding student tardiness, absenteeism, and truancy. These procedures shall provide for:

- the clear expectation among students and their parents/guardians regarding the need for regular, consistent attendance at school;
- a uniform understanding among staff, students, and their parents/guardians of the requirements for excused absences;
- the potential of consequences for unexcused absences; and
- the possibility that a student may be required to receive remedial assistance even when all absences are excused but potentially have negatively impacted their education.

The Board requires that District and building-level procedures developed to implement this policy contain the following specific elements:

1. Annually at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment during the school year, the school administration shall inform students and their parents/guardians of the school attendance requirements, the building-specific procedures regarding absenteeism, and obtain a phone number or other means of contacting the parents/guardians during the school day. This and all subsequent notifications regarding student absenteeism shall be made in such a manner as to be easily understood by both students and their parents/guardians (for example, using an alternative language when the primary language in the home is not English).
2. Each school shall monitor individual student absences; additionally, Fitch High School will track student absences for each class.
3. Whenever a child enrolled in grades Kindergarten to eight fails to report to school on a regularly schedule school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the pupil's absence, school personnel shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parents/guardians by telephone in regard to the student's absence. If school personnel are unable to reach the student's parents/guardians via telephone, then a letter will be sent to the student's home address requiring the parents/guardians to contact the school.
4. The District and each school shall have procedures for coordinating services with and making referrals to community agencies providing child and family services. These organizations should be used to address, where appropriate, the student's personal or family issues that may be affecting his or her ability to attend school on a regular basis.
5. Student tardiness and unexcused absences may be used as factors in determining eligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities.

6. In an effort to prevent absenteeism from rising to the level that it affects a student's academic performance, building-level procedures implementing this policy shall include a tiered series of interventions designed to recognize the factors uniquely affecting a student's attendance and put in place various support actions that can have a positive effect on both their future attendance and academic performance.

Pledge of Allegiance - (Policy #6115.4)

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal decision not to recite the Pledge, such student may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their philosophy, belief, or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

Sexual Harassment - (Policy #5145.5)

V The Groton Public Schools recognize that sexual harassment, including sexual assault, is unlawful sex discrimination. The Board of Education (Board) prohibits sex discrimination/sexual harassment in the District's education program or activities. Education program or activity includes locations, events, or circumstances over which the school exercises substantial control over both the respondent (alleged perpetrator of sexual harassment) and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs. In addition to occurring on school grounds, sexual harassment may potentially occur off campus, in places or situations where athletic and extracurricular activities occur, on field trips, on the school bus, at school related conferences, or through use of school technology.

Schools shall respond to sexual harassment occurring in the District's education program or activities for which they have "actual knowledge." "Actual knowledge" means notice of sexual harassment or an allegation of sexual harassment brought to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator, any official of the school who has authority to institute corrective measures on the behalf of the school, as well as to any other employee of an elementary or secondary school.

Sexual harassment may take the form of student-on-student, employee-on-student, employee-on-employee, student-on-employee, or may be perpetrated against students or employees by third parties under the control of the District. Students who engage in proven sexual harassment may be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion. Employees who engage in proven sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as well as, other action required under the law including but not limited to a referral to DCF for suspected child abuse.

Definition of Sexual Harassment for the Purposes of Title IX

Sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- (i) A school employee conditioning an education benefit or service on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (i.e. quid pro quo)
- (ii) Unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would determine is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the District's education program or activity;
- (iii) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092 (f)(6)(A)(v)(the Clery Act), "dating violence" as defined 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30) (the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)).

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- pressure for sexual activity
- repeated remarks with sexual or sexually demeaning implications
- unwelcome or inappropriate touching
- sexual assault
- suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning a student's grades or academic standing or an employee's employment status
- telling lewd jokes or sharing stories about sexual experiences – even if not directed at an individual but done in his/her presence to cause him/her discomfort
- sending unwanted suggestive or lewd emails, letters or other communications or sharing images of a sexual nature around the workplace or displaying posters, items, or screensavers of a sexual nature
- repeatedly asking for dates despite being rebuffed
- making sexually offensive gestures or facial expressions
- dating violence or stalking

Other Definitions

“Complainant” is defined as a person who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

“Respondent” is defined as a person who is alleged to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

“Supportive measures” are defined as non-disciplinary, non-punitive, individualized services, offered as appropriate and without charge to a complainant or respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint, or where no complaint has been filed.

Title IX Coordinator

The Superintendent of Schools shall designate and authorize the Director of Pupil Personnel Services to be the District's Title IX Coordinator. This individual shall be given the title of, and shall be referred to as, the Title IX Coordinator and shall be responsible for ensuring compliance across the District with Title IX, corresponding state law, and applicable Board policy concerning sex discrimination/sexual harassment.

Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, or legal guardians of elementary and secondary school students, employees, and, all unions shall be notified of the name or title, office address, electronic mail address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator.

The Title IX Coordinator's contact information shall be posted on the District's website and included in student and employee handbooks and published in other locations as deemed appropriate.

Reporting Sexual Harassment

Any person, including, but not limited to, students, parents or guardians, employees, bystanders, or third parties (whether or not the person is the alleged victim), may report sexual harassment, including sexual assault, occurring in the District's education program or activities. Reporting may occur in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail, using the contact information provided for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report.

Reports may be made at any time, including during non-business hours.

A formal complaint is defined as a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against an individual and requesting that the District investigate the alleged sexual harassment. In an instance where the Title IX Coordinator signs the complaint, the Title IX Coordinator is not a party to the complaint nor is such action taken on behalf of the complainant.

The Title IX Coordinator will make forms available for both informal reports and formal complaints of sexual harassment. Additionally, such forms will be posted on the District's website. Informal reports are permissible and may be brought by any person. However, only a complainant and the District's Title IX Coordinator may file a formal complaint. All formal complaints shall be investigated. Supportive measures shall be offered to a complainant with or without the filing of a formal complaint.

There is no time limit on a complainant's decision to file a formal complaint, but complainants are encouraged to report incidents of sexual harassment promptly, and/or to file a formal complaint.

Response including Supportive Measures

Any school employee with actual knowledge of sex discrimination/sexual harassment shall promptly inform the District's Title IX Coordinator. The failure to do so may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Upon actual knowledge of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will promptly contact the complainant to advise and discuss with the complainant 1) the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint, 2) the right to file a formal complaint, and 3) how to file a formal complaint.

A complainant, as well as a respondent shall be offered free, individualized "supportive measures" (e.g. counseling, course related adjustments, modification of work or class schedules, escort services, increased security/monitoring of certain areas, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties) designed to restore or preserve equal access to education with or without a formal complaint. These, as well as other measures, may be part of a final remedy.

Upon the filing a formal complaint, the complainant will be provided with a copy of this policy and its grievance procedures.

Written notice shall be provided to the respondent and to the complainant advising that a formal complaint has been filed. The respondent shall be entitled to a presumption of innocence during investigation of the complaint. Both parties will be treated fairly throughout the investigation and shall be entitled to an unbiased investigator who has not prejudged the matter being investigated.

Complaints that fail to allege a violation of Title IX shall be dismissed without investigation. This does not preclude the school administration from investigating or addressing the underlying conduct under relevant codes of conduct or board policy.

Emergency Removal/Administrative Leave

An emergency removal of a respondent from the education program or activity is permissible provided that the District conducts an individualized safety and risk analysis and determines that emergency removal is necessary to protect a student or other individual from an immediate threat to physical health or safety and notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision is provided. This does not modify any rights under the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

An employee-respondent may be placed on administrative leave during the pendency of a grievance process.

Informal Resolution

At any point in the formal complaint process, the Districtwide Title IX Coordinator, in his/her discretion, may offer to facilitate an informal resolution option such as mediation or restorative justice.

Both parties must give voluntary, informed written consent.

Either party has a right to withdraw consent at any time, in which case the formal investigation shall proceed.

The informal resolution process shall not be available if the complainant/victim is a student and the respondent is an employee.

Grievance Procedures

The District will promptly and thoroughly investigate all formal complaints of sexual harassment in accordance with established grievance procedures.

District grievance procedures shall be established in the form of a regulation accompanying this policy.

The grievance procedure shall be used for the reporting and investigation of, and response to, a formal complaint of sexual harassment in the District's education program and activities against a person in the United States.

The District's grievance procedures shall be designed to comply with the regulation under Title IX as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education, as it may be amended from time to time. Among other required provisions, the grievance procedures shall establish standards for fairness and equity, including a requirement that the decision maker not be the same individual as the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator shall:

- Explain how to file a complaint;
- address required notice;
- set out timelines for various components of the investigation and adjudication process;
- establish and explain grounds for the dismissal of a complaint;
- provide and explain the appeal process available to both parties;
- include a presumption of innocence for the respondent;
- state the evidence standard to be used to determine responsibility;
- require objective evaluation of all available evidence.

Training

Training shall be provided to Title IX personnel in accordance with the regulation under Title IX as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education, as it may be amended from time to time. Additional training may be provided to all school employees as deemed advisable.

Prohibition Against Retaliation

Retaliation against any party, witness, or other participant to the grievance process is prohibited. Retaliation may form a basis for a complaint under this policy. The charging of a person with a code of conduct violation based upon a person making a materially false statement in bad faith in an investigation is not considered retaliatory.

Dissemination, Posting, and Discussion of Policy

This policy along with its accompanying regulation/grievance procedure shall appear in the Student Handbook, be discussed with students at least annually and more often as needed, be posted in prominent and accessible locations in each school building and in the Board of Education offices, and be published on the District's website along with the name/title and contact information for the Title IX Coordinator.

Record Keeping

The District shall keep records related to reports of alleged sexual harassment for a minimum of seven years, including investigation records, disciplinary sanctions, remedies, appeals, and records of any action taken, including supportive measures. Additionally, the Districts must also keep for a minimum of seven years any materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, any employee designated to facilitate an informal process.

Alternate Complaint Procedures

In addition, or as an alternative to the filing of a sex discrimination/sexual harassment complaint through the District's grievance procedure, a person may choose to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education.

Statement of Protected Rights

Application of this policy and its grievance procedure shall not be interpreted to restrict rights protected under the U.S. Constitution, including the right to free speech, to be free from self-incrimination, and to due process of law.

Safe School Climate

In accordance with Public Act 11-232, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws, the Groton Public Schools has developed a Safe School Climate Plan which is based on the National School Climate Standards. The plan, which is available on the district's website, presents a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate through the implementation of the following standards:

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate.
2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting:
 - a. The development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement; and
 - b. A comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.
3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
 - a. Promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students.

- b. Enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities.
 - c. Address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged.
 - d. Develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.
4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically.
 5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

If you have questions about the District's Safe School Climate Plan, please contact Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, at (860) 572-2152. To speak to the Safe School Climate Specialist in your child's school, please contact the school directly.

Anti-Bullying - (Policy #5131.911)

The Groton Public Schools maintains a firm policy prohibiting bullying. Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyber bullying, 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:

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

Bullying shall include, but is not be limited to, a written, oral 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 mental, physical, 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.

Bullying may take many forms, such as but not limited to:

1. Physical violence and attacks;
2. Taunts, name-calling or put-downs or discriminatory slurs;
3. Targeting of a student based upon that person's actual or perceived "differentiating characteristics" such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national or ethnic background, disability, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, or a student's association with a person or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;
4. Threats and intimidation;
5. Extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
6. Cyber bullying means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

A comprehensive program to address bullying at all school levels is essential to reduce incidents of bullying. Therefore, bullying prevention and intervention programs shall be implemented at all Groton Public Schools. These programs will strive to develop a school environment:

- which firmly limits bullying behavior;
- where non-hostile, non-physical negative consequences are consistently applied in cases of bullying behavior;
- where adults act as authorities and positive role models; and where students and parents are included in efforts to improve the school climate.

Prevention and intervention strategies may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Implementing an evidenced-based model for positive behavioral interventions;
- A school climate survey;
- A bullying prevention committee;
- Clear display and reinforcement of school rules;
- Adult Supervision;
- School-wide training related to a safe school environment;
- Provision for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying and annual notification of the process for reporting bullying.

The following standards shall be observed in dealing with observed bullying behavior:

1. Students are encouraged to report acts of bullying to teachers and school administrators, on an anonymous basis, if necessary or appropriate.
2. Parents or guardians of students may file written reports of suspected bullying with the school principal. Teachers and other school staff members who witness acts of bullying or receive student or parent reports of bullying are required to notify the school principal/designee immediately and in writing. This immediate communication must be accompanied by an acknowledgement that the principal/designee has received the information.
3. Principals or other designated school administrators shall investigate all written reports and review all anonymous reports of bullying, and report their findings to the Superintendent of Schools. Each such report shall include an intervention strategy where appropriate. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. An anonymous report may lead to a more thorough investigation.
4. The parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying shall be notified of the bullying behavior, including a description of the response of school staff to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying. Both sets of parents/guardians will receive in writing an invitation to attend separate meetings to discuss intervention efforts. Documentation of invitations shall be maintained.
5. Appropriate corrective action shall be taken by school administrators to insure that bullying behavior does not continue and to prevent retaliation against any person who reports, or is the victim of such bullying, including disciplinary and/or counseling action where appropriate.
6. Each of the Groton Public Schools shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying and shall make such list available for public inspection.
7. Reasonable training will be made to all staff holding an educational certificate where there is not an evidence-based model approach.
8. If anyone feels appropriate action has not been taken, a written complaint can be filed to the Title IX Coordinator.

Physical Examinations - (Policy #5141.31)

Sports Physicals - It is the Policy of the Board of Education to require physicals for participation in sports. Physicals for participation in sports for athletes shall be required within thirteen months prior to the date the student is to participate in interscholastic sports. Documentation of this physical must be placed in the student's health record.

The Board of Education recommends that all physicals be performed by the student's own physician. If, for some reason, this is not feasible, the school will assist the parent in contacting the ***School Based Health Center***.

Mandated Physicals - It is the Policy of the Board of Education to require periodic health assessments prior to Kindergarten, Sixth and Tenth grades, unless objected to in writing on religious grounds by the parents or guardian of the student (or by the student if age 18 or over). No record of such medical examination shall be open to public inspection.

Suspension/Expulsion - (Policy #5114)

All employees in the school system shall have an obligation to monitor the behavior of students and to report student misbehavior in accordance with the terms of the Groton Board of Education policy on Suspension/Expulsion. A complete description of the board's policy is included with this student handbook.

Definitions of significant words and phrases in the policy and the sections of the policy are included here. *Refer to the policy to fully understand the expulsion/Suspension topic.*

Note to students: If for any reason you are in possession of anything that you have a question about, discuss this with any adult in the school.

Definitions:

- A. **Bullying** is defined as 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:
- a) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property,
 - b) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
 - c) creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
 - d) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
 - e) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but is not be limited to, a written, oral 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 mental, physical, 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.

Bullying may take many forms, such as, but not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks;
 2. taunts, name-calling or discriminatory slurs, including but not limited to insulting, disparaging or derogatory comments regarding a person's race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national or ethnic background, disability, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, or a student's association with a person or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;
 3. threats and intimidation;
 4. extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
 5. cyberbullying.
- B. **Controlled substance** means a drug or other substance identified under schedules I, II, III, IV, or V in Section 202(c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 USC 812 (c)). 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(1). "Illegal drug" means a controlled substance, but does not include a controlled substance that is legally possessed or used under the supervision of a licensed health care professional, or that is legally possessed or used under any other authority under that Act or under any other provision of federal law. 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(2).

- C. **Cyberbullying** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone, or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.
- D. **Dangerous instrument** is any instrument, article, substance or device which is capable of causing death or serious physical injury, or which poses a serious threat to school personnel, students or property, including by way of example, but not limited to any knife with a metal blade or a razor, utility knife, box cutter, or any instrument, article or substance which, under the circumstances in which it is used or attempted or threatened to be used, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury to persons or property.
- E. **Deadly weapon** is any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles, as defined in C.G.S. 53a-3(6).
- F. **Emergency** is a situation under which the continued presence of the student in school poses such a danger to persons or property or such a disruption of the educational process that a hearing may be delayed until a time as soon after the exclusion of the student as possible.
- G. **Expulsion** is the exclusion from school privileges for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, and is deemed to include, but not be limited to, exclusion from the school to which the student in grades three to twelve, inclusive was assigned at the time the disciplinary action was taken, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond a period of one calendar year.
- H. **Exclusion** is any denial of public school privileges to a student for disciplinary purposes.
- I. **Firearm** is any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, the frame or receiver of any such weapon, any firearm muffler or firearm silencer, or any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas such as a bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, mine or any similar device, and excluding an antique firearm, as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921, as amended.
- J. **In-School Suspension** is the exclusion from regular classroom activity for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, but not exclusion from school, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond the end of the school year in which the in-school suspension was imposed.
- K. **Martial arts weapon** is a nunchaku, kama, kasari-fundo, octagon sai, tonfa or chinese star, as defined in C.G.S. 53a-3(21).
- L. **Removal** is the exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond ninety (90) minutes.
- M. The Part B regulations state that the term **serious bodily injury** has the same definition found at Section 1365(h)(3) of the U.S. criminal code. 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(3). That provision defines serious bodily injury as bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty. 18 USC 1365 (h)(3); 71 Fed. Reg. 46,722 (2006).
- N. The term **seriously disruptive of the educational process**, means a marked interruption or severe impediment of the day to day operation of the school. In making such a determination the administration may consider, but shall not be limited to: whether the incident occurred within close proximity of a school; whether other students from the school were involved, or whether there was any gang involvement; whether the conduct involved violence, threats of violence, or the unlawful use of a weapon, as defined in C.G.S. 29-38, and whether any injuries occurred; and whether the conduct involved the use of alcohol or drugs. This definition of “A seriously disruptive of the educational process” shall apply to all portions of this Policy.
- O. **Suspension** is the exclusion from school privileges, or from transportation services only, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, provided the exclusion does not extend beyond the end of the school year in which the suspension was imposed. A student in grades preschool to two, inclusive, may be given an out-of-school suspension if it is determined by the administration that such suspension is appropriate based on evidence that the student’s conduct on school grounds is of a violent or sexual nature that

endangers persons. In addition, it is a person's duty [as a mandated reporter] to report suspected child abuse or neglect is not limited by this provision.

- P. The definition of a **weapon** under the IDEA mirrors the definition of a "dangerous weapon" found in the U.S. criminal code. 34 CFR 300.530 (i)(4). The criminal code defines "dangerous weapon" as "a weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocket knife with a blade of less than 2.5 inches in length." 18 USC 930 (g)(2).

Suspension/Expulsion Policy Outline:

- Section I Definitions [provided above]
- Section II Removal of students from class
- Section III In-school suspension of students; Reassignment
- Section IV Suspension of students
- Section V Expulsion of students
 - A. Procedure
 - B. Special Education
 - C. Student records, transfer and withdrawals
 - D. Readmission
- Section VI Standards governing suspension and expulsion
 - A. Statutorily required expulsion proceedings
 - B. Statutorily prohibited expulsion or out-of-school suspension of preschoolers and students in kindergarten through grade two with certain exceptions
 - C. Statutorily required expulsion for students in grades K through 2 who commit certain offenses
 - D. Statutorily required expulsion of preschoolers who possess a firearm
- Section VII Notice of disciplinary policies and action
- Section VIII Statutory modification
- Section IX Exclusion from co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

Dangerous Instruments - (Policy #5131.7)

The Board of Education, concerned for the safety and welfare of all students and school personnel in school and at school sponsored activities, prohibits carrying of a dangerous instrument on, or introducing a dangerous instrument onto, school grounds or at school sponsored events or on any school vehicle.

Possession and/or use of any such dangerous instrument by a student shall result in an expulsion hearing, as required under Board of Education Policy 5114.

Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco - (Policy #5131.6)

It is the policy of the schools to take appropriate action in the handling of incidents in the schools involving the possession, sale and/or use of behavior affecting substances. These substances shall include but not be limited to alcohol and controlled substances as defined by the Penal Code of the State of Connecticut and inhalable substances (including gases, solvents, butane, propane, adhesives).

In the event that the student is under the influence of a drug or alcohol, or engaged in the illegal activity of possessing or selling drugs and/or alcohol, he/she will be suspended/expelled from school in accordance with the suspension/expulsion policy.

Personal privacy rights of students shall be protected as provided by law.

School properties may be inspected by school authorities in the interest of maintenance, health and safety. Inspections for the location of drugs, narcotics, liquor, weapons, poisons, and missing property are matters relating to health and safety and may be regarded as reasonable purposes for inspection by school personnel.

The Board is also concerned that other substances, not listed as “controlled substances”, such as contained in common household items and inhalants, if purposely used inappropriately, can also have a stimulant, depressant or hallucinogenic effect on students. Inappropriate use, possession, sale or distribution of these non-controlled substances will result in disciplinary action, including but not limit to, suspension and/or expulsion. Further, grade level appropriate education pertaining to proper use of these materials and the danger of abuse shall be presented.

Smoking and/or possession of tobacco products by students are prohibited in school buildings, on school grounds, at school activities, and on school buses at all times.

Psychotropic Drug Use - (Policy #5141.231)

The Board of Education prohibits all school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any student enrolled within the school system. This shall not prohibit (nor require) a recommendation by the school’s medical staff, including school nurses and/or the District’s medical advisor, for evaluation by an appropriate medical practitioner. Further, upon the consent to the student’s parents or guardian, school personnel may consult with the medical practitioner regarding such use.

The refusal of a parent or other person having custody of a child to administer or consent to the administration of any psychotropic drug to the child shall not, in and of itself, constitute grounds for referral to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) unless such refusal causes such child to be neglected or abused, as defined in C.G.S § 46b-120.

Surveys of Students (Student Privacy) - (Policy #6162.51)

All requests to conduct surveys, analyses or evaluations shall be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools for approval.

In this policy, “surveys, analyses, or evaluations” refer to methods of gathering data for research purposes.

No student shall be required as part of any program to submit to any survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

- A. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent;
- B. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family;
- C. Sex behavior or attitudes;
- D. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- E. Critical appraisals of others;
- F. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- G. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student’s parents; or
- H. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program without the prior written consent of the student’s parent/guardian.) For the purpose of this policy, “instructional material” does not include academic tests or assessments.

All instructional materials, regardless of format, including teachers’ manuals, films, tapes or other supplementary material which will be used in connection with any such survey, analysis, or evaluation shall be available upon request for inspection by the student’s parent/guardian, or of the student, if he/she is 18 years of age or older. Academic tests and assessments are not included.

A parent may inspect, upon request, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to a student.

The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for implementing any procedures necessary to protect the privacy of participating students and to provide parents with access to surveys within a reasonable time before administration or distribution.

Parents shall have the opportunity to exclude their children from participating in such surveys, analyses, or evaluations; request to exclude students from surveys shall be submitted within 48 hours of the administration of the survey.

Insofar as practicable acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which a research request is made or is approved only after the school year has begun. When this occurs, the school unit should notify parents far enough in advance for them to access surveys and related instructional materials and to exclude their children from participating, if desired.

Homeless Children and Youth - (Policy #5118.1)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act, reauthorized in January 2002, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Homeless children and youth are defined as (A) individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (B) includes: (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; (iii) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii); and unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and are living in the above circumstances.

Children and youth who meet the federal definition of homeless will be provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as other children and youth in the District. Homeless children and youth will also have access to educational programs and other services if needed, to enable them to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students in the District are held. Homeless children and youth will not be separated from the mainstream school environment nor will they be denied enrollment based on lack of proof of residency or lack of documentation of required physical examinations and immunizations.

For additional information regarding the provision of education to homeless children or youth contact Denise A. Doolittle, District McKinney-Vento Liaison at 1300 Flanders Road, Mystic, CT 06355 or at 860-572-2152.

Migrant Students - (Policy #6141.312)

The Superintendent will develop and implement a program to address the needs of migrant children in the District. Migrant students are students who move with itinerant workers (parent(s)/guardian(s) who travel from one area to another in search of work.

This program will include a means to:

1. Identify migrant students and assess their educational and related health and social needs.
2. Provide a full range of services to migrant students including applicable Title I programs, special education, gifted education, vocational education, language programs, counseling programs, and elective classes.
3. Provide migrant children with the opportunity to meet the same statewide assessment standards that all children are expected to meet.

4. Provide advocacy and outreach programs to migrant children and their families and professional development for district staff.
5. Provide parents/guardians an opportunity for meaningful participation in the program.

Migrant Education Program for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of migrant students will be involved in and regularly consulted about the development, implementation, operation, and evaluation of the migrant program.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of migrant students will receive instruction regarding their role in improving the academic achievement of their children.

For purposes of this policy, the term “migrant” student shall mean a student who is, or whose parent or legal guardian is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker and migratory fisher worker, and who, within the preceding thirty-six (36) months, has changed school districts to obtain, or for his/her parents to obtain, agricultural, fishing or dairy work.

HEALTH

Asbestos Management

The school district complies with Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA). Specifically accredited/certified persons will be utilized as required to inspect all school buildings for asbestos-containing material. Appropriate action will be taken to control the release of asbestos fibers upon completion of inspections. Corrective steps and long-range maintenance in a management plan shall be made available to all concerned persons and filed with the Department of Public Health.

Employees, parents and the public shall be notified of this plan. Records shall be maintained of the location of all known asbestos and records shall be maintained of all abatements. Further information concerning the school district’s procedures for asbestos control, removal and disposal can be found in the school district offices.

Pesticide/Herbicide Application Plan

The use of pesticides/herbicides in the Groton schools is regulated. Pesticides/herbicides are not used at the elementary and middle schools in Groton.

Green Learning Program

Environmentally preferable cleaning products that minimize the potential harmful impact on the environment and human health are chosen for use in the Groton schools. Products are chosen that meet or exceed standards approved by the Federal Department of Administrative Services in consultation with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection. Such products include but are not limited to general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners, glass cleaners, floor finishes, floor strippers, hand cleaners, and soaps. Employees, students, parents and others entering Groton Public School facilities are prohibited from bringing any cleaning products into the schools.

Groton Public Schools

Code of Conduct

Respect

- Respect the learning process.
- Treat others as you would have them treat you.
- Understand, respect and celebrate diversity.
- Respect personal and school property.

Responsibility

- Learn from mistakes.
- Be on time.
- Be prepared.
- Do your best every day.
- Dress appropriately.

Commitment

- Be a committed learner.
- Participate in class every day.
- Be a productive citizen of the school community.
- Celebrate success.

APPENDIX

Groton Public Schools 2023-2024 School Calendar

July 2023

0 days / 0 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

3,4 July 4th Recess
5-27 SpEd Summer School
31 SpEd Ext ABA Summer Session
TBD Summer School 9-12 at FHS

August 2023

2 days / 2 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

1-10 SpEd ABA Summer Session
23 Freshman Orientation
30 First Day of School (Grades 1-12)
31 First Day of School (Kindergarten)

September 2023

20 days / 22 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

4 Labor Day
5 First Day of K/PreK/Preschool
26 TLI-Early Dismissal

October 2023

21 days / 43 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

9 Columbus Day
17 TLI-Early Dismissal
25-27 Parent/Teacher Conferences
Early Dismissal (ES & MS)

November 2023

17 days / 60 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

7 Professional Development
10 Veteran's Day
22-24 Thanksgiving Recess

December 2023

16 days / 76 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

12 TLI-Early Dismissal
22 Early Dismissal
25-29 Winter Holiday Recess

January 2024

21 days / 97 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

1 New Year's Day
9 TLI-Early Dismissal
15 Martin Luther King Day

February 2024

19 days / 116 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	

13 TLI-Early Dismissal
19, 20 Presidents Day Recess

March 2024

19 Days / 135 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

8 Professional Development
12 TLI-Early Dismissal
20-22 Parent/Teacher Conferences
Early Dismissal (ES & MS)
29 Good Friday

April 2024

17 days / 152 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

8-12 Spring Recess
23 TLI-Early Dismissal

May 2024

22 days / 174 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

14 TLI-Early Dismissal
27 Memorial Day

June 2024

7 days / 181 accrued

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

11 Last Day of School-Early Dismissal
12-14 Snow Make-up Days
19 Juneteenth
FHS Graduation - TBD

GRADE LEVEL	MARKING PERIOD ENDS	REPORT CARDS ISSUED
Grades K - 5	Nov 30 Mar 6 June 11	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the marking period ends.
Grades 6 - 8	Nov 2 Jan 22 Mar 28 June 11	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the semester ends.
Grades 9 - 12	Nov 2 Jan 22 Mar 28 June 11	Report cards will be distributed within 10 school days after the semester ends.

No School for Students - Professional Development, Holidays, School Recess

Early Dismissal - Parent/Teacher Conferences, TLI, Last Day of School