



**2009-2010**

**Overlook Middle School**

**Parent/Student Handbook**

We are a community.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Letter from the Principal

Dear Parents,

It is my sincere hope that you and your families have had the relaxing and energizing summers that you deserve. I look forward to starting my second year here at Overlook and am excited to have the students back at school. The 2009-2010 school year will be filled with many new experiences and opportunities for all children and I ask for your help as parents to encourage them to participate whenever possible. Any student that becomes involved in the various programs, activities, and events that go on in the school will have full access to all the Overlook has to offer.

As always my door is open and I urge you to come in at anytime to discuss concerns or ideas that you may have for enriching your child's experience here. I know that we will have a fun and enjoyable 2009-2010 school year and hope that you all feel welcomed to become productive members of our school community.

Sincerely,

Phil Saisa  
Principal

## Letter from the Assistant Principal

Dear Students and Parents,

I extend a warm welcome to our returning seventh and eight grade families and a special welcome to our sixth grade families who are becoming part of the Overlook Middle School Community.

Each member of the Overlook community has the right to participate in a school environment that is conducive to the learning process and that is safe for both students and staff. Acceptable student behavior is essential in the creation of this environment and is developed through the collaborative efforts of the home and the school. When the home and school join efforts to create an environment that fosters academic excellence, while providing care and support, each student can be successful. Communication is key in this process and that is the prime reason for this handbook.

This handbook contains information that will prove valuable in helping make the educational experience for each Overlook student worthwhile and rewarding. This book has been compiled as a tool for students and their parents as they transition to Overlook and become an integral part of the school community. This book was also prepared to assist students and their parents in understanding the school and its policies. In addition this handbook includes information regarding the scope of the school programs and activities offered. It is essential that all students and parents read this handbook so everyone can contribute to a safe, positive, proactive process for teaching and learning.

Overlook's academic, athletic, arts, and extracurricular programs emphasize structure and encourage participation and cooperation. Overlook recognizes and values the diversity of interests, backgrounds and abilities that characterizes its Middle School students. Overlook works together to create a safe and welcoming environment in which trust and mutual respect are fostered, minds are challenged and body and spirit are nurtured.

From the classroom to the athletic fields, to the arts and beyond Overlook Middle School maintains a reputation for excellence and outstanding citizenship. I look forward to another successful school year where students will continue to grow and learn as they make their mark through outstanding accomplishments in our learning community.

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year!

Sandra Rehler  
Assistant Principal

## **Parent Note**

We encourage parents/guardians to take an active role in the education of their children. We welcome your involvement. Parents can help in many ways, including the following:

- Providing an atmosphere at home that encourages students to study and complete their schoolwork.
- Knowing and supporting school policies, especially in the area of teacher expectations and disciplinary procedures.
- Calling the school and/or arranging for conferences with the teachers when you have questions.
- Sharing your ideas or constructive criticism directly with the staff members involved.
- Cooperating in discipline problems.
- Keeping informed of your children's school progress.
- Attending Parent Information Nights, monthly PTO meetings, School Council and other school programs and activities.
- Calling with any questions. Our telephone number is 978-827-1425.
- Accessing OMS webpage for information regarding academic requirements and current school events. ([www.awrsd.org/oms](http://www.awrsd.org/oms))

## **Expectations for Overlook Middle School Parents**

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you as members of the Overlook Middle School community. Your child's education does not begin and end within our building. Your child's level of confidence and chances for success increase greatly when parents and staff work together as a team.

In the spirit of open communication, we would like to share our expectations for you as Overlook Middle School parents. Following these guidelines will help you better perform in your role as a parent while you guide your child during his/her education.

- Communicate directly with Overlook Middle School when you have questions or concerns.
- Support the decisions of the school community.
- Conduct yourself with dignity and decorum at all athletic, social and academic events sponsored by Overlook Middle School.
- Discuss disputes in a polite and calm manner, at the appropriate time, with the appropriate person. If you have an issue and are not sure with whom to speak, please call the main office.
- Volunteer for fundraisers and other school activities that benefit your school. Your caring presence speaks volumes to your child about how highly you value his/her education.

## **Middle School Philosophy**

The middle school staff of the Overlook Middle School recognizes that the middle school years are unique and challenging ones for the adolescent passing through them.

Adolescence is a wonderful time, a time of profound change for youngsters as they make the adjustment from childhood to adulthood. It is a time when most students experience significant physical growth and become increasingly concerned about their appearance and social connections.

Our philosophy recognizes that the middle school must be a place where the gradual transition from elementary school to high school is accomplished. We believe that the middle school must be a place where students are encouraged and assisted in developing all areas of individual personality – physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. We accept the responsibility of responding to the individual needs, abilities, and interests.

A wide variety of teaching styles will meet the diverse learning styles of students. Staff and students will strive to create a learning environment that is intellectually stimulating, and aesthetically pleasing. The ultimate goal of the middle school is to develop students who are equipped with the skills to be successful and who have gained a life long appreciation for learning.

## **Mission Statement**

Recognizing the unique needs of our early adolescent students, the staff of Overlook Middle School is dedicated to ensuring a successful transition from middle school to high school by:

- Providing a caring, welcoming, supportive environment for all;
- Teaching a standards-based curriculum, fostering intellectual, emotional, physical and social development;
- Cultivating individual strengths and talents within a heterogeneous environment;
- Collaborating and communicating with parents and the extended community;
- Developing learners, who value, respect and accept the diversity of others.

## **Guiding Principles**

Our School believes in:

- Working collaboratively with dedication and knowledge to create exciting possibilities for all students.
- Building a strong sense of community that actively cultivates respectful, supportive relationships among students, teachers, and parents to help all students reach their potential.
- Creating an integrative, challenging, and exploratory curriculum that is student-centered and taught in a nurturing, caring, and structured setting.
- Teaching study habits and the skills of communication, research, technology, problem-solving, critical thinking, and social interaction in a manner that actively engages students in relevant learning experiences.

- Providing guidance programs that support the social, emotional, and academic needs of middle level students.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities which emphasize maximum involvement, group unity good sportsmanship, and the well-being of students.
- Incorporating cooperative learning experiences that cultivate an appreciation for and acceptance of the diversity among individuals.
- Establishing networks of communication for the exchange of ideas and information and sharing of experiences among staff and the community that will enhance student achievement and success.

## **SCHOLASTIC INFORMATION**

### **Grading & Homework Policy**

#### **Homework Guidelines**

Homework is an integral part of Overlook Middle School’s academic and enrichment programs. The faculty and staff at Overlook believe that the purpose of homework is to provide students with opportunities to extend classroom lessons and to transfer specific skills and concepts to new situations. In addition, homework is designed to develop personal responsibility, self-discipline, and effective study habits. As with all instructional activities, homework assignments should be meaningful, relevant and grade appropriate. Homework assignments will increase in both length and scope as the student progresses from grade 6 to grade 8. Students at Overlook are required to keep daily assignment books and write down homework in each class. Completing homework and assignment preparation is essential for students to become successful learners. Students are expected to submit their homework by the announced due date.

#### Purpose of Homework Assignments

Homework assignments should fulfill one or more of the following:

- Drill and practice to reinforce and strengthen skills introduced in the classroom
- Purposeful reading of assigned literature or text materials
- Research activities
- Work on reports or projects
- Study for tests and quizzes.

#### Projects and Reports

Long range assignments including projects and reports can provide students with valuable opportunities to integrate a variety of skills and concepts into a single assignment. Book reports, research projects, interdisciplinary projects, written reports, and studying for tests and quizzes take careful planning and organization on the part of students. Parental support is essential for student success. Such assignments should include specific written directions for the student including due dates, purpose, expectations, and procedures.

### Team Planning

Team teachers will communicate to ensure that students are not faced with several different projects, lengthy assignments, or major tests at the same time.

### Amount of Homework

Parents should recognize that the amount of homework assigned to students generally increases as the student progresses through our school. While it is not possible to establish rigid time limits, homework for grades 6, 7, and 8 may range between 60 and 120 minutes.

### Late Homework

It is the student's responsibility to see that homework assignments are handed in or ready to be checked on the due date assigned by the teacher. Students whose homework is incomplete on the assigned due date may be subject to the following:

After school detention for makeup work

A zero for the assignment

It is not the responsibility of a teacher or teaching team to provide parents and students with a list of missing assignments for students who choose not to do homework during or at the end of a term. Homework is most often, an immediate need that reinforces a skill learned that day or prepares a student for the next day's lesson. To make up assignments days or weeks later serves little or no purpose and interferes with current daily lessons. Students may be granted an extension for an assignment due to extenuating circumstances if requested in writing by a parent or guardian. Teachers will keep parents notified of any student's lack of effort in preparing homework either through progress reports, phone calls home, or report card comments.

Students who fail to complete three homework assignments in a given class will be referred to the assistant principal. The assistant principal will contact the parent, and the student will be placed on an academic performance contract for a period of two weeks. Following the two week period, a student's homework performance will be re-evaluated. If there has been no improvement, additional steps such as a period of academic probation and being assigned to the afterschool homework workshop will be implemented.

### Make-up work

If a student will be missing school for a period of time, the team leader and office should be given advance notice in writing. Prior to the student's departure, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for the timely completion of any missed assignments. Upon the student's return, it is the student's responsibility to make up missed assignments in a period deemed appropriate by the team and enrichment teachers. If your child is going to be out of school for two or more days, due to illness, parents may call the office before 9:00 am to have homework available by 2:00 pm. Students and parents are encouraged to visit the Overlook web site ([www.awrsd.org/oms](http://www.awrsd.org/oms)) for homework assignments.

### School Vacations

The faculty and staff at Overlook feel very strongly that school vacations should be a time for families to spend together, and therefore will not assign homework assignments that are due immediately following the three school vacation weeks (December, February, and April Break). However, long-range assignments may necessarily need to be assigned over these time periods.

### Weekend Homework

Any homework that is assigned over a weekend should model the time commitment of one average weekday homework assignment. The purpose of any weekend assignment is to maintain student focus on class work in preparation for the following day's lesson.

### **Progress Reports**

We feel it is important to keep parents informed as much as possible about their child's progress in school. To this end, each teaching team sends home a mid-term progress report for every child. If you do not receive a report at the midpoint in the term, please call the team leader. Enrichment teachers issue progress reports as needed through each four-week cycle.

Occasionally, a student or parent needs more information. In those cases, we offer a weekly report. Arrangements will be made through the Team Leaders.

### **Report Cards**

Report Cards: Issued in November, January, April and June. Student grades are issued as follows:

A+,A, A-	.....	Outstanding	A+	97-100
B+, B, B-	.....	Above Average	A	93-96
C+, C, C-	.....	Average	A-	90-92
D+, D, D-	.....	Below Average	B+	87-89
F	.....	Failing	B	83-86
INC	.....	Incomplete	B-	80-82
MED	.....	Medical Excuse	C+	77-79
NG	.....	No Grade	C	73-76
P	.....	Passing	C-	70-72
			D+	67-69
			D	63-66
			D-	60-62
			F	50-59

### **Incompletes**

In case of incomplete course work, the following applies:

Students with incompletes are not eligible for after school activities.

Incompletes are given to students who have had medical problems or other issues that have prevented them from attending school for extended periods of time.

Each team or enrichment teacher will decide on completion dates for make-up work.

If work is not completed on time, the incomplete becomes a failing grade.

## **Honor Roll**

The Honor Roll exists to recognize academic achievement. Honor Roll eligibility for grades 6, 7, and 8 is as follows:

- Highest Honors... No grade lower than an A-.
- High Honors... Majority of A's and no grade below a B-.
- Honors... No grade lower than a B- in any subject.

## **Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences are held annually in November. Students or parents may arrange conferences with teachers or guidance counselors as needed. You should make arrangements through your team teachers, or parents may call the Guidance Office to schedule an appointment.

## **Promotion and Retention**

### **Philosophy**

The Ashburnham-Westminster School Committee is dedicated to providing the best total and continuous developmental program for each individual enrolled in its schools. The professional staff is expected to place students at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially, and emotionally. Students will normally progress annually from grade to grade. However, exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the professional staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the student involved.

Exceptions to this annual promotion may include these:

- retention
- conditional promotion involving summer school
- transfer
- placement in available special remedial programs

### **Criteria for Promotion and Retention**

The ultimate criteria in determining whether a student should be promoted or retained is whether that student has the basic skills necessary to function effectively at the next grade level. This is an educational decision and should be made by the professional staff.

Other factors to be considered in the placement of a student will be:

- age
- past performance
- academic aptitude
- social and emotional maturity
- prediction of success
- results of standardized tests
- health and attendance records

## **MCAS Testing Schedule for 2008-2009 School Year**

- English Language Arts (March 22, 2010 – April 12, 2010)
- Math and Science & Technology/Engineering (May 10, 2010 – May 27, 2010)

## **SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

### **Teaming**

The students at Overlook Middle School are divided into six interdisciplinary teaching teams. These teams have approximately 100 students who share the same math, science, social studies and English teachers. These teachers organize the teams' activities, share information about students and generally assist the team in running smoothly. Meetings with parents usually include all teachers from the team. The teams of students do not remain the same from year to year.

### **Enrichment Courses**

In addition to math, science, social studies, and English, students at Overlook also take additional courses. In grades six enrichment courses will meet for 30 days per cycle and in grades seven and eight 26 days per cycle. The class periods will be 80 minutes long. Each student will take eight enrichment courses during the school year.

These include:

- Art
- Music
- Family Health
- Technology Education
- Information Literacy
- Physical Education (once per year)
- World Language (Spanish)
- Career Awareness (The Real Game)

Students will be graded in these courses, as in other core academic subjects, and homework may be required. Enrichment classes are an important part of Overlook's goal to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of all students.

### **Donna Philbin Library/Media Center (LMC)**

The library media program aims to support and enrich the Overlook Middle School curriculum. Students have the opportunity to be exposed to a wide range of print and technology based resources. Library and information skills are integrated with classroom curricular instruction through research assignments and interdisciplinary projects. Students receive a general orientation to the LMC that covers location skills, library organization, search skills for using the computer catalog, and borrowing procedures. Students may come to the library with their class teacher or obtain a pass to go on their own. The library will also be available to students after school until 2:30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. At the library students may search the library's computer catalog, borrow books and materials, use reference sources, search computer databases, and work on projects requiring the use of the library. Students may access the Internet at the library and use the library web page to complete class assignments. The library web address is: [www.awrsd.org/oms/LMC\\_Homepage.html](http://www.awrsd.org/oms/LMC_Homepage.html)

**Student Responsibilities:**

- The LMC is a place of study and work. Students should be respectful of others by behaving in a responsible manner and to handle all materials, computer equipment and furniture with care.
- No food or drink is permitted in the library.
- Borrowing is a privilege and students are expected to return books on time.
- Students are held accountable for lost or damaged materials, which may result in a bill to replace the book.
- Students with unreturned library books may become ineligible for the end of the year SOAR Day assembly.

**Achieve Program**

The Achieve Program is a program set up for special needs students. These students have specific needs that can best be addressed in a small group and often in an individualized setting. Within this program, the students meet daily for individualized instruction and are also included within the mainstream of a “regular education” team. The goal of the program, through this team approach, is to foster independence and self-worth by teaching functional academic achievement and socially acceptable behaviors. The result is that students will strive toward challenging/competitive employment for themselves in the future. There is also a group of Overlook students, known as the Circle of Friends, who meet weekly to support the Achieve students in the Overlook community. The Achieve Program runs the school store and the Quick Stop Café. Both are open on Thursday mornings. Family and community members are welcome. The school store will be open during lunches and students may visit with a pass.

**Band**

The Overlook Middle School Band is open to any student in grades 6, 7 and 8 who plays an instrument. Each grade level practices separately twice a week during TAP. The entire band practices together on Thursdays. The band plays a variety of music from the classics to contemporary music. The band performs several concerts each year and also competes in a variety of competitions.

**Jazz Band**

Jazz band students are selected by audition. Jazz band begins in January and continues to the end of the school year. The emphasis is on improvisation and creativity. Jazz band performs at school concerts, jazz band festivals, and the SOAR Day assembly.

**Chorus**

The Overlook Middle School Chorus is open to any student in grades 6, 7, and 8 who wants to sing. Rehearsals for the choral program occur after school. Individual auditions will be held for participation in Overlook’s Select Chorus. The chorus sings a variety of music from the classics to contemporary music. Several concerts are given each year. The chorus also competes in the ACDA Choral Festival each spring.

## **Drama**

Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 will expand their dramatic knowledge through improvisation games and performance experience. All students may audition to be part of school-wide productions which rehearse after school. Past productions include Alice in Wonderland and Annie Jr.

## **SWAP- School Wide Activity Period**

Each week our schedule provides for a School Wide Activity Period (SWAP). The Overlook staff offers many different activities for students. An effort is made to equalize the number of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in most activities. Every 10-12 weeks the activity offerings change so students have an opportunity to explore three to five different activities each year. Exploring creative skills along with discovering new interests are natural outcomes of our SWAP program.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

In order to provide the best possible environment for learning, we expect that the students of Overlook Middle School will:

- Give and get respect.
- Respect other people's property.
- Do all their homework.
- Come to class prepared with pen, pencil, books, or materials necessary for enrichments such as gym clothes.
- Complete all assignments to the best of their ability.
- Obey all school rules.
- Stay after school when told to do so.
- Take care of property loaned to them in school.
- Be on time to all classes.
- Prompt return of school forms / permission slips.

## **Arrival and Dismissal from School**

The Overlook Middle School building opens at 7:30 am - when the students are dismissed from the buses. Walkers and students traveling via personal transport should also arrive for 7:30 am. You may not enter your classrooms until 7:30 am unless previously arranged with a teacher. The late bell rings at 7:40 am. If you arrive at school early, please report directly to the cafeteria. You should not go to your locker or be in the corridor unless you have permission from a teacher.

School dismissal is at 2:05 pm. For your safety, you may not run through the lines of buses nor may you go into any of the parking areas.

### **Early Dismissal Request**

If you are going to be dismissed while classes are in session, you must bring a written request from home to the main office when you arrive at school to receive a dismissal pass. The note must state the reason for the dismissal and the time. You must report to the main office before leaving the building to give your signed dismissal pass to the office. You will be released only to an adult as specified in the note. The adult also must report to the main office before you will be released.

### **Care of School Property**

Students shall be held responsible for all books or other school property issued to them during the school year. Students are required to cover all of their textbooks. In a case of loss or damage of school materials, students will be required to pay the full replacement value. Outstanding obligations resulting from nonpayment of goods, books and materials may result in the withholding of official documents until all obligations have been met. Students with outstanding obligations will be ineligible to participate in any school activities until such bills are paid in full.

### **Attendance**

The Ashburnham-Westminster School District considers regular attendance in school as most important for the student to receive these benefits:

- skilled dissemination of knowledge
  - socialization with other students in a structured setting
  - lively classroom interaction
  - varied enrichment activities
  - cultural awareness and diversity
  - academic success
1. The compulsory school attendance law in Massachusetts requires all students between the ages of seven and sixteen to be registered in school and be in regular attendance. Specifically Massachusetts General Law, Ch. 76, sec. 2 reads “Every person in control of a child shall cause him to attend school as therein required.....” A student who misses more than one-half of a school day is define as absent for the entire day.
  2. Ch. 76, S.1. reads, “Necessary absences by a student may not exceed 7 days or 14 half days in any six month period.” A death in the family, health professional appointment, religious holiday, required court appearance or illness with proper documentation are considered excusable reasons for being absent from or tardy to school. Parents are discouraged from scheduling vacations when school is in session.
  3. In the case of absence, the parent should call the school to report the child’s absence. For the protection of the student, parent, and the school, it is the regular practice of the school to make calls to the homes of students who are listed absent and whose parents have not called.
  4. Upon the student’s return to school, the student must bring a note from home including the full name, date(s) absent, reason for the absence, and the signature of the parent/guardian. This note must be given to your child’s homeroom teacher. A note is not required if you made a phone call.

5. If a student is absent for more than five consecutive days due to illness, a doctor's note may be required.
6. If your child is going to be out of school for two or more days due to illness, parents may call the school before 9:00 am to have homework available by 2:00 pm. The office will give the message to the team leader. The team leader will bring collected homework to the office.
7. Students will not be allowed to participate in after school activities if they are absent for more than half a day on the day of the activity. Students must be in school by 11:00 am.
8. Truancy cases require a parent/guardian to accompany the student back to school and the child will make up for lost time on succeeding days.
9. Students must provide the nurse and physical education staff with a medical note from a doctor in order to be excused from gym. Notes from a parent will not be accepted.

### **Attendance Policy**

The Administration in collaboration with the School Resource Officer, will work to promote 100% student attendance. In the event that the student exhibits patterns of habitual absences, the following policy will be enforced.

1. At the culmination of 4 unexcused absences or tardies, a parent contact will be made via phone.
2. At the culmination of 8 unexcused absences or tardies, a second contact will be made via letter to request a parent/administrator conference.
3. At the culmination of 12 unexcused absences or tardies, a CHINS (Child in Need of Services) will be filed with the Fitchburg Juvenile Court System with a charge of school truancy.

### **Tardiness**

1. Any student arriving at school after 7:40 am will be considered late and must report to the office for admittance slip to homeroom or class.
2. When a student does arrive late, a note of explanation should be presented to the office. Excused reasons include medical appointments. Unexcused reasons include oversleeping and missing the bus (unless it is the bus company's fault).
3. Each student will be allowed three unexcused tardy passes per marking term. Students will receive an administrative detention for each successive tardy accumulated during the remainder of the term.
4. Excessive tardiness will require a meeting with the parent/guardian to alleviate the problem.

## **Truancy**

Absentee lists are checked to make sure the student is legitimately absent. Once you are truant, the following consequences will apply:

- Administration will contact with parent or guardian.
- Student will be responsible for the completion of all class work with a potential reduction in credit.
- In-school counseling may be recommended.
- The School Resource Officer will be notified to investigate an absence.
- An administrative detention will be given for each day truant.
- Students under sixteen years of age may be apprehended by police in accordance with state law.
- Repeated truancy for students under sixteen years of age will result in the filing of a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition in juvenile court.

## **CHINS (Child in Need of Services)**

A CHINS petition may be filed in court by the appropriate school official of a child between the ages of six and sixteen who persistently and willfully fails to attend school or persistently violates lawful and reasonable regulations of his or her school. The court's authority pursuant to a CHINS petition includes the power to place the child in the custody of the state agency known as the Department of Social Services.

## **Academic Honesty**

### **Cheating/Plagiarism**

A student shall not copy or attempt to copy another person's work. No student shall conspire to cheat on an assignment or test by handing in another student's work, using cheat notes, or looking on another student's paper. Plagiarism is defined as stealing and passing off the ideas and words of another as one's own, using a product without crediting the source, turning in a paper retrieved from any Internet source (either free or for a fee) or including information from an encyclopedia, book, textbook, web site, database, etc. without citation is plagiarism. A paper is considered plagiarized if any part of it is taken from another source without proper citations.

### **Forgery**

A student shall not sign a parent/guardian name to any school document for the purpose of gaining parental permission/acknowledgement. Said documents include but are not limited to; detention slips, field trip permission forms, behavior contracts, bus notes, report cards, and progress reports.

### **Sanctions**

Sanctions for violation of Academic Honesty will result in a zero grade for the assignment in question, and/or discussions involving the student, teacher, guidance counselor, parents and administration. Serious or multiple offenses may result in administrative consideration for suspension.

## **Classes Supervised by Substitute Teachers**

Substitute teachers are professional staff members who do the important work of enabling us to continue important learning activities when teachers are absent. Students are required to show respect for all substitute teachers and complete the class room assignments given by substitute teachers. Students must follow the instruction given by the substitute teacher and must comply with all standards of behavior expected of students at Overlook.

Failure to comply with the above will result in the student being assigned consequences as defined by the Discipline Code.

## **Dress Code**

Students are expected to exercise maturity and responsibility in all matters including their dress and personal grooming. Overlook is a place of serious work and dress should be attuned to that concept. Students should remember at all times the five guiding principles of dress: neatness, suitability, moderation, cleanliness and safety. School is a serious work environment and clothing should be appropriate to that setting.

Teachers and the administration will determine the interpretation of these guiding principles. Any attire that is disruptive, distracting, covers the face or does not conform to standards of common decency and propriety is forbidden. Wearing apparel harmful to school property or that could be injurious including clothing with chains is not permitted. Footwear must be worn at all times, subscribing to public health and sanitation standards. Outside clothing, including hats, coats, jackets or sunglasses must be kept in lockers. We do not advocate tobacco, drugs, alcohol or sex and we do not allow clothing that advertises or advocates these topics.

Some current fashion trends are not acceptable in our school environment. These include but are not limited to: pants worn low on the hips to reveal underwear or the midriff, midriff or breast baring tops, short shorts or skirts, pajama tops or bottoms, leggings worn alone or with short shorts or a skirt, tank tops, halter tops, spaghetti straps, beachwear, underwear as outerwear and any form of revealing clothing. Dress for physical education must adhere to the dress code. Sneakers must be worn and tied securely for all physical education sports/activities.

Refusal to change or cover offensive clothing items will result in disciplinary measures for insubordination and may result in removal from school.

School administrators and/or teachers will use the following guidelines for dress code infractions.

- 1st offense – Warning and asked to change. Parents will be notified by telephone or letter and may be asked to bring in appropriate clothing. Dress code reviewed with the student.
- 2nd offense – Detentions will be issued and parents will be asked to bring appropriate clothing.

- 3rd offense – Detentions will be issued and students may be sent home.

A general rule of thumb to follow: If you are not sure if it is inappropriate to wear – don't.

### **Book Bags**

Students will not be allowed to bring their book bags to class. Upon arriving at school, the bags must be kept in their lockers. Students will be given opportunities to get needed materials from their lockers per team guidelines.

## **BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES**

### **Disciplinary Concept**

Rules and regulations are necessary. They are merely the visible products of an attitude toward discipline, a system of values by which an individual conducts himself/herself. The basis for this attitude is mutual consideration for the needs of others. Discipline is an extension of an adult's concern for a child's welfare. Discipline is a set of limits for the child so that he/she knows what is and what is not acceptable. Discipline is enforced through mutual trust and this trust is established through a recognition of the dignity and value of each individual. A child will respond to disciplinary policies if he/she feels that the people setting the limits are really concerned about him/her. It is important to understand the rationale supporting reasonable disciplinary action. Any action must be designed to modify the individual's future behavior in an appropriate direction. It should be limited to protect others in the school environment from physical endangerment. Disciplinary action should ensure the rights of those in the school to teach and learn productively. Disciplinary action should always be administered in a dignified, firm, and consistent manner.

Specific policies have been developed from this concept of discipline. The policies are reasonable and fair and have, as their ultimate objective, effective student self-discipline. Communication and cooperation are the keys to a successful program of school discipline.

### **Classroom Infraction Procedure**

Teachers are responsible for establishing standards of conduct. They should use common sense to diffuse or stop situations which interfere with the educational process. Teachers need to recognize the individual differences in students. Teachers are encouraged to refer students to guidance counselors when appropriate, as there may be underlying causes for a student's behavior.

In their attempts to affect student behavior, teachers are encouraged to utilize all school resources including guidance counselors, the school adjustment counselor, nurse, student support teachers, and other staff. These resources should be utilized by teachers before situations need the attention of the administration.

Teachers are encouraged to contact parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and/or notify guidance counselors when appropriate to enhance communication between home and school.

There are some areas of discipline which should remain in the classroom and be handled by the classroom teacher. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Tardiness to class;
2. Being prepared for class;
3. Talking and other minor disruptions;
4. Passing notes;
5. Minor horseplay;
6. Chewing gum, candy, etc.;
7. Non-participation in classroom activities/assignments; and
8. Cheating (see Academic Honesty, contained herein; disciplinary action by administrators may occur.)

### **Dangerous Weapons and Incendiary Devices**

Possession of dangerous weapons or incendiary devices of any kind will not be tolerated at Overlook. Incendiary devices include, but are not limited to, firecrackers, smoke bombs, matches and lighters. Any object that could be used to injure another person and that has no school-related purpose for being in school or on school property or at school-sponsored or school-related events will be considered a weapon for purposes of this code. Appropriate criminal laws (MGL 37H) will be enforced in any situation where a student is found in possession of weapons. The possession of a firearm or other dangerous weapon in the school environment is an expulsion offense as well as a crime punishable by a fine of \$1000.00 and/or one year imprisonment. Any student in possession of any kind of weapon will be immediately referred to the Administrative Office. The parent or guardian will be notified, and disciplinary action will be taken including a ten (10) day out of school suspension and a recommendation for expulsion from school. See **Selected Applicable State and Federal Laws** for MGL 37H and 37H 1/2.

A reminder to all students that pocket knives, box cutters or razor knives are considered dangerous weapons under the code -- do not bring them or any other knife to school.

Possession and/or lighting of any incendiary device, which includes but is not limited to fire crackers, smoke and stink bombs, or the irresponsible use of matches or lighters in and around the school building will result in suspension from school.

### **Chemical Health Policy**

During the school year, a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use or consume, possess, buy/sell or give away any material containing alcohol, any tobacco product, or any controlled substance while under school jurisdiction.

(1) **Tobacco or Tobacco Products**: The use or possession of tobacco in any form is prohibited while in school, at school related functions, on school property and school

buses. A student found in possession of or using tobacco products will be suspended from school a minimum of three days (see **Suspension from School**).

(2) **Intoxicants, Alcohol and Drugs**: The use of, attendance after use of, or possession of intoxicants, drugs, alcohol and/or any controlled substance at school functions or while under school jurisdiction is prohibited. It will result in a minimum 10-day suspension from school and/or a recommendation for expulsion from school and confiscation of intoxicants, alcohol and/or drugs (see **Expulsion**). Students suspended for violating this provision will have to see a certified Alcohol or Drug Abuse Counselor as a requirement for readmission. The parent or guardian will be notified; law enforcement officials will be notified and legal action may follow at the discretion of these officials.

Attendance at school or school functions while "under the influence", "hung-over" or smelling of intoxicants violates the policy as "attendance after the use of" category and carries the same penalty. **The possession of substances or paraphernalia that are meant to represent illegal substances also violate this policy.**

Any student found to be selling or distributing any of the above on school property or while under school jurisdiction will be subject to **expulsion** from school.

### **Public Display of Affection**

Overlook rooms, hallways, and school grounds are NOT a place for public displays of affection. Those who are confronted by public displays of affection are frequently embarrassed and uncomfortable and such situations are not necessary. Continued incidents of public affection will result in disciplinary action, as well as parental contact.

### **Civil Rights - Discrimination**

No student shall discriminate, by either verbal or physical action or attacks, based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Reports of such activity should be directed to the school administration and appropriate disciplinary action taken.

Some indicators that a crime was hate-motivated include:

- Use of racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or anti-gay slurs
- Use of symbols of hate, such as a swastika or a burning cross
- Similar behavior by the wrongdoer towards other students from the same racial, ethnic or religious group or against students from the same sexual orientation
- The incident occurs while the victim was participating in an activity promoting a racial, ethnic/national origin, gender or sexual orientation group.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

The Overlook Middle School is committed to providing a safe and constructive learning environment that honors the dignity and worth of every individual. It is the responsibility of Overlook Middle School to address bullying and harassment issues that occur. Staff members will create an orderly environment within the school through training and will monitor and intervene when bullying and harassment occur.

Bullying and harassment are forms of dangerous and disrespectful behavior that will not be permitted or tolerated. Bullying and harassment may involve a range of misconducts which, based on the severity, will warrant a measured response of corrective action and/or discipline. Behaviors that do not rise to the level of bullying and harassment, as defined below, may be subject to intervention and/or discipline under another section of the discipline plan or a discipline policy.

## DEFINITIONS

### Bullying

Bullying means any act or combination of acts directed against a student(s) by another student or group of students which:

- (a) is repeated over time;
- (b) is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or harm the student(s);
- (c) occurs during the school day on school property,
- (d) occurs during the school day on a school bus or at a bus stop,
- (e) occurs during the school day at a school-sponsored activity,
- (f) before or after the school day on a school bus,
- (g) or before or after the school day at a school-sponsored activity.

### Harassment

Harassment means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, at a bus stop, or at a school-sponsored activity.

- (a) a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property; or
- (b) will have the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to cause substantial disruption with a student's education, or substantial interference with the orderly operation of the school.

### Bullying and Harassment can take various forms:

- (a) Physical (including, but not limited to hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking or damaging personal belongings);
- (b) Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats);
- (c) Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, engaging in social exclusion, extortion or intimidation);

- (d) Internet or cyber-bullying (including, but not limited to, the use of instant messaging (IM), e-mail, web-sites, chat rooms, and text messaging that is used to bully or harass another student or employee, and when such use interferes with the operation of school, or infringes upon the general health, safety and well-being of students and employees);
- (e) Hazing (including, but not limited to, various forms of bullying and harassment of students by other students in regard to pledging and/or a student's initiation into or affiliation with a school related organization or team);
- (f) Including asking anyone to verbally abuse, threaten or intimidate another student on one's behalf.

It is important to note that a single negative act as stated above may also constitute bullying (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the alleged perpetrator.

Conduct that might otherwise be considered bullying and harassment but does not occur during the school day or on school property, on a school bus, at a school bus stop, or at a school-sponsored activity event may still be subject to disciplinary action.

Rules against bullying and harassment shall be publicized school-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff students, and parents. Discipline sanctions for violations of this policy shall be outlined in the Overlook Middle School Parent/Student Handbook.

Prevention and intervention techniques at Overlook Middle School to prevent bullying and harassing behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by the administration.

Staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of bullying and harassment within the school and to facilitate staff identification of and consistent response to such bullying and harassing behavior among students.

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent bullying and harassing behavior of which they have been made aware through direct action and/or reporting such behavior to their immediate supervisor.

Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, harassers, victims, bystanders, and their parents to help ensure that the bullying or harassing stops.

## REPORTING OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

### Students:

- (a) Overlook Middle School encourages students to speak up when possible
  1. If possible, the bullied or harassed child should tell the bully/harasser to stop to the extent that a person feels safe and comfortable in doing so. A target is first encouraged to confront the bully/harasser, telling them to stop because their actions are unwelcome.
  2. Bystanders are also encouraged to speak up when possible, telling the bully/harasser to stop the conduct because it is disrespectful, unwelcome, hurtful, or unfair.
- (b) If the student(s) does not feel safe addressing the bully or harasser, Overlook Middle School encourages students to report to teachers and/or school administrators acts of bullying or harassment. Any student who knowingly makes false accusations regarding bullying or harassment may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Tattling vs. Reporting**

Overlook Middle School defines tattling as telling an adult about another student's actions with the sole purpose of getting the student in trouble.

Overlook Middle School defines reporting as "telling" an adult about another student's actions with the purpose of getting help with a difficult situation, e.g. one that is threatening or hurtful.

### Staff:

- (a) Overlook Middle School requires teachers and other staff who witness acts of bullying or harassment or receive student reports of bullying or harassment to promptly notify the principal or designee.
- (b) Reports of bullying or harassment must be documented to provide proof of a disruptive behavior pattern. Each report should contain the name of the student(s) reporting, date and time, narrative of facts and be signed by the person receiving the report and list the action taken.
- (c) Overlook Middle School requires the principal or designee to accept and review all reports of bullying and harassment, including anonymous reports. If after initial inquiry, an anonymous or oral report appears to warrant further investigation, Overlook Middle School shall promptly continue with the investigation. School administrators shall investigate any written reports.

- (d) Anonymous Reporting: Please mail to Overlook Middle School  
10 Oakmont Drive  
Ashburnham, MA 01430  
Attention: Administration
- (e) Truly anonymous reports (e.g. unidentified telephone calls, unsigned letters) should also be documented to the extent possible. Remember, completely anonymous reports are generally less reliable and are difficult to use alone in support of disciplinary action.
- (f) When bullying is found to have occurred, consequences will result using the rubric-based discipline system format followed by the school.
- (g) Overlook Middle School requires school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits acts of bullying or harassment. They also will be informed of the consequences that may result in the event of further acts of bullying or harassment.
- (h) To the extent permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, (FERPA), Overlook Middle School requires school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a target of repeated bullying or harassment of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying and harassment.
- (i) A school employee who promptly reports an incident of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official designated by the school policy, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures in the school policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising from any failure to remedy the reported incident.
- (j) Overlook Middle School prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complaints, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of bullying or harassment. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged bully/harasser and victim shall be made to ensure that bullying/harassing behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation of allegations of bullying/harassment have not suffered retaliation.

### **Bully and Harassment Discipline Rubric**

Behavior	1st Time	2nd Time	3rd Time	
Social Aggression	Consequence Group I	Consequence Group I or II	Consequence Group II or III	After 3 incidents, develop a behavioral contract.
Hitting	Consequence Group I	Consequence Group II	Consequence Group III	After 3 incidents, develop a behavioral contract.
Severe hitting, threats of violence, or severe harassment *	Consequence Group II	Consequence Group III	3 or develop a behavioral contract.	After 3 incidents, develop a behavioral contract.

#### Consequence Group I

Visit with a counselor

Visit with the principal

Promise not to repeat

Apology (offender's idea)

Apology letter (offender's idea)

Loss of a recess

Telephone call to parent from student

Removal from participating in activities in the area where bullying and harassment offenses take place

#### Consequence Group II

Extra time with a staff member (positive role-model and interaction)

Restitution if property was damaged

Repairing property, if damaged

Telephone call to parent from counselor

Letter to parent

Student / parent / staff conference

Oral / written/ multimedia report/ presentation on bullying

Detention (that includes positive time with staff member, social skills training, school service, etc.)

### Consequence Group III

Skills training, i.e., anger/emotional management, conflict resolution, etc.

Behavioral Contract

FBA / BIP (Functional Behavioral Assessment followed by a Behavioral Intervention Plan)

School service

Suspension (used as cool off time)

Community service

\*If the student has broken the law, the school will inform the police.

### **Discipline Code**

#### **Academic Probation**

Students who have not passed all of their academic and enrichment subjects in a term will not be able to participate in any of Overlook's extracurricular activities. Examples of these activities include dances, class trips, sports, evening and sports events. A student's eligibility will be reassessed at progress report time.

#### **Social Probation**

Students who have demonstrated poor attendance, continual tardiness, poor attitude, lack of effort, behavior problems, and a general lack of trust will not be allowed to participate in Overlook's extracurricular activities. Students who have been suspended from school will not be able to participate in any of Overlook's after school activities. Students suspended from 1-3 days lose 15 days of activities. Students suspended 4-7 days lose 20 days of activities. Students suspended 7 or more days lose 40 days of activities. Examples of these activities include dances, class trips, sports, intramurals, evening activities and games.

Once a student has accumulated five detentions for serious behavior infractions he/she may be suspended from school. Serious behavior infractions include, but are not limited to disrespect to staff, disrespect to students, swearing, verbal abuse, and harassment.

#### **Detention**

1. When a student has caused a problem in school, he/she will be assigned a detention. The detention will be served the following day from 2:05 to 2:40 pm. The student is to report to the teacher who assigned the detention no later than five minutes after dismissal. Failure to do so will mean another detention. Upon dismissal the student is to leave the building immediately. Detention lasts until the arrival of the late bus.
2. Failure to accept the responsibility of showing up for detention will require a meeting with the administration. If the first offense is unexcused, the student will receive two administrative detentions. Students who continue to miss detentions will be subject to further consequences, including parent conferences and, if necessary, out of school suspensions.

3. Overlook Middle School is sensitive to the transportation problems that arise when students have detentions. We also believe that detentions must be served in a timely manner in order for them to be effective. Students are given a minimum 24-hour notice before a detention has to be served. If a student cannot stay because of transportation problems on a first offense, we ask that the student bring a note to school stating the problem and make arrangements to serve this detention within a five day period. If there is a continued transportation problem (more than twice), a parent conference will be requested with the administration and the team/teacher to discuss and resolve this issue.

### **Suspension**

Suspension from school is a denial of a student's privilege to attend school and school activities for a specified period of time. It is a step taken for Level III, Level IV and Level V infractions as outlined in the Disciplinary Guidelines or when other disciplinary actions have proven ineffective in correcting the student's inappropriate behavior. A student may be suspended from school by the school administration for a period of up to 10 school days. The school administrator will notify the parent or guardian via a written report setting forth the reasons for the suspension and to arrange a readmission hearing.

At the conclusion of a suspension, the student's parent or guardian must make an appointment to meet with the appropriate school administrator to review the circumstances which resulted in the suspension. This parent-administration meeting is a condition for readmission of the student to school. A suspended student may not attend any school-sponsored activity or function for the duration of his/her suspension and for a probationary period of up to 30 days, at the discretion of the school administrator, following his/her readmission to school.

### **Expulsion**

Expulsion is the result of the most serious offenses as it denies educational access at Overlook. Students violating our **Chemical Health Policy**, or School Reform Law 37H/37H1/2 (see **Selected Applicable State and Federal Laws**), or repeatedly violating school rules, disrupting the educational process, and/or harming other members of the school community, may be subject to a Principal's hearing with a recommendation for permanent removal from the school.

### **Disciplinary Offense Code Levels**

Five levels of disciplinary violations, along with the consequences for breaking school rules, have been established. It should be noted, however, that the listing of these violations cannot anticipate every eventuality that would require a written policy. Where such policies do not exist, the administration will formulate and recommend them, and they will be considered in effect until modified or rejected by the School Committee.

### **Level I**

Unexcused tardy to school; tardy to homeroom, or class; misconduct in class or out of class; pass violations; refusal to sign detention; truancy; public display of affection; and loitering:

1<sup>st</sup> Offense = 1 teacher or administrative detention

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense = 2 teacher or administrative detentions

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense = 3 teacher or administrative detentions

### **Level II**

Failure to be in assigned area; truancy; failure to attend assigned teacher or administrative detention; referral to an administrator for disruptive or inappropriate behavior in class or out of class; dress code violations; minor technology misuse; forgery; and false identification:

1st Offense = 2 administrative detentions

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense = 5 administrative detentions

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense = 2 day suspension

### **Level III**

Leaving or returning to school grounds without permission; vulgar, obscene or defamatory language; accumulation of minor infractions; accumulation of tardies; insubordination; continued dress code violations, continued PDAs:

1st Offense = 2 day suspension

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense = 3 day suspension

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense = 5 day suspension

### **Level IV**

Gross disrespect to persons of authority by word or action; accumulation of administrative detentions; harassment; nonconformity to school rules; major technology misuse; trespassing on school property:

1st Offense = 3 day suspension

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense = 5 day suspension

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense = possible suspension for up to 10 days and referral to the Superintendent

### **Level V**

Vandalism; theft; extortion; hazing; possession, use of, or attendance after the use of alcohol, drugs, drug paraphernalia or tobacco (see **Chemical Health Policy**), weapons or incendiary devices; pulling of false fire alarms; threats of violence; bomb threats; assault; threats; fighting; threats and assaults against faculty, staff, or administration, or any other illegal acts:

Law enforcement officials may be notified.

Punishment will incorporate penalties outlined in Level IV at the discretion of an administrator as well as referral to the School Committee by the Superintendent with all legal requirements prescribed, including exclusion from school.

## **Discipline of Special Needs Students**

The disciplining of special needs students is governed by federal and state special education law and the regulations promulgated there under. These laws include the Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1400, et seq., 34 C.F.R. section 300.519, et seq., and Massachusetts General Laws c71B.

If a special needs student has violated school rules, the school may suspend the student from his or her educational placement for up to ten school days without consideration of manifestation rights. If a student on an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is suspended for more than ten days in a school year, the team must conduct a manifestation determination.

During a manifestation determination meeting, if the team answers yes to either of the following questions, the student's conduct is considered to be a manifestation;

1. Was the conduct in question caused by or did the conduct have a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability; or
2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP?

When the conduct in question is deemed to be a manifestation of a student's disability, the team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavior intervention plan. Regardless of whether a behavior is deemed to be a manifestation or not, the district is obliged to provide services that will enable the student to continue to receive a free appropriate public education.

School personnel may order a change in the placement of a student with a disability to an interim alternative educational setting for up to forty-five (45) days in a student 1. carries a weapon to school or to a school function; or 2. knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or at a school function. Under the described circumstances in this section, or if the removal of a student will constitute a change in the student's placement, a student's IEP team may convene to review the student's educational program and the misconduct.

## **SCHOOL SERVICES**

### **Guidance**

#### **Guidance Office**

Phone: 978-827-1422

Mrs. Cathy Keene

Mrs. Julie Gagnon

TBA

Mrs. Wendy Higgins

Fax: 978-827-1423

School Counselor (6 Blue, 7 Navy, 8 White)

School Counselor (6 Green, 7 Red, 8 Orange)

Adjustment Counselor

Guidance Secretary

### **Mission Statement**

The Overlook Middle School counseling program works to create a safe, welcoming, nurturing environment to support all students. Our mission is to provide a comprehensive program that cultivates each student's academic, career and personal/social growth. Counselors collaborate with students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members to promote the value of positive citizenship and lifelong learning.

### **School Counselors**

School counselors, in addition to their team responsibilities, are involved in the following:

- Academic counseling
- Crisis counseling (individual and group)
- Home/school liaison activities
- Transitional activities (elementary to middle school and middle school to high school)
- Student registrations and transfers
- Grade 7 Career Awareness Program – *The Real Game*
- Grade 6 Orientation
- School wide initiatives
- Grade 7 SOS (Signs of Suicide)
- Secondary School Application Process (Montachusett Regional Vocational, Private Schools)

Students may receive a pass from time to time to meet with the school counselor. However, students can arrange a meeting whenever needed, by stopping by the Guidance Office. Students are welcomed and encouraged to visit with their counselor at any time.

### **Adjustment Counselor**

The adjustment counselor meets with students who have a counseling component as part of their individualized educational plan.

### **School Psychologist**

The school psychologist provides assessment and consultation services for the district through the special education department.

### **School Resource Officer**

Overlook Middle School has a working relationship with both the Ashburnham and Westminster Police Departments through our school resource officer. Working in conjunction with the Administration, the School Resource Officer assists in our anti-bullying program, drug resistance education, and truancy issues.

## Medical/Health

### School Nurse

Students should consult the school nurse when they have any problems or questions pertaining to health. Medical treatment consists of first aid for injuries that happen in school and care for students who become ill during school hours. Students who take prescription or over-the-counter medication during the school day **MUST** have a medication order from a physician, dentist, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, along with written consent signed by the parent/guardian on file in the nurse's office. Breathe sprays are also not allowed in school. All medication must be in the original container, i.e. the prescription bottle which was dispensed from the pharmacy, taken under the supervision of the school nurse, and brought to school by a parent/guardian or a responsible adult, and given directly to the nurse. **ALL MEDICATIONS** will be dispensed under the supervision of the nurse. A student who wishes to see the nurse during school time must secure a pass from the teacher and should report directly to the nurse's office. If the student needs to leave school during the day because of illness, the nurse will notify the parent/guardian so that they may arrange transportation for the student. If your child calls you and tells you to pick them up because they are being dismissed for illness, something is not right. Please call the School Nurse to verify the dismissal. Students should not use the pay phone to call home for a dismissal. Failure to follow this policy will result in an after school detention.

Screenings performed yearly, for all students, in accordance with the Massachusetts' Department of Health guidelines include the following:

- postural screening
- vision
- hearing
- height
- weight
- blood pressure

### Physical Examination

Students entering Grade 7 and all students who are new to the district must have a physical examination. All students who participate in competitive sports also must have a physical examination **ANNUALLY**. The physical must be done prior to participation in the sport, which includes practice. The physical exam must be done by an athlete's physician. The physical exam form must be forwarded to the school nurse **BEFORE** practice begins. All student physical exams are **valid for one year** and need to be updated for participation in any sport activity. The physical exam form must include the date that the physical was given and state whether or not the student is physically fit for competitive sports.

### SOAR

In the fall of 1996, a committee was formed to discuss additional ways we could recognize students for achievement. The discussions led to the creation of SOAR or Student/Staff Over Achievement Recognition Program. The committee developed

a mission statement and goals for the program. Students who receive Caught Being Good Cards are eligible for chances for prizes through weekly and end of the year drawings. Each student will receive information about this program at the beginning of each school year. SOAR is also responsible for the Highest Soaring Eagles Banquet and Citizen of the Term program.

#### Highest Soaring Eagles Banquet

The SOAR Committee honors grade eight students who have demonstrated exceptional achievement during their three years at Overlook Middle School. Students and parents are invited to a banquet that is held in the spring. To receive this recognition, students must have maintained Highest Honors for at least five terms and Honors for the remaining terms. Eligibility will be determined at the end of the second quarter of grade eight. Students who transfer to OMS must meet the academic criteria listed above.

#### Citizen of the Term

In 2002, the SOAR Committee introduced a new program called Citizen of the Term. This program honors students from each team during the first three terms of the school year. In addition to being academically successful, teachers look for students who volunteer within the Overlook community, pick SWAP cycles that benefit others, volunteer in their own community, and/or are involved in clubs, teams or outside school activities. Students must show effort, exhibit good character, demonstrate positive behavior, and have leadership skills. Each candidate must attend school on a regular basis and have no behavior detentions. After review of the nominees, the Citizen of the Term subcommittee votes to choose the recipients. These honored students will be displayed on the school bulletin board and their names will be read on the school announcements. Then they will be honored during their individual team awards assembly. Later, an article is written for a local newspaper and a group picture is included. We truly believe this is a worthwhile project that enhances the Overlook community and supports our mission statement.

#### SOAR Day

On the last day of school, all Overlook students attend an assembly in the gym to participate in our annual SOAR Day program. This is the day that our students take part in drawings that afford them an opportunity to win a variety of prizes. All of the Caught Being Good cards given out during the year are put into a box and winners are picked during the assembly. In addition, all of the students who earned Soar ID cards during the year have an opportunity to win prizes in the drawings. The drawings are divided between CBG cardholders and SOAR ID cardholders. This is the culminating event for the SOAR program each year.

#### **Food Service**

The Food Service Department serves a nutritious hot lunch with many choices. The price for a complete lunch is \$2.75 and reduced lunch is \$.40. Milk remains at \$.50 for the students.

A pre-payment system for lunch is an option that is available and greatly appreciated for the Food Service Policy adopted by the AWRSD School Committee on October 9, 2007 states that middle school students will be allowed to charge a maximum of one school meal. Chartwells maintains the records of students who utilize the pre-payment system.

The Food Service Director is always available to parents and may be reached at 978-874-1501.

### **Cafeteria**

Lunch is 25 minutes. Students may buy a hot lunch or bring lunch from home and buy additional items. When they have finished lunch, students will take their tray or trash and dispose of it properly. Everyone at a table is responsible for the overall condition of the area. Any student who misbehaves in the cafeteria may lose cafeteria privileges.

Students are to stay seated while they eat their lunch.

Below is a list of the cafeteria rules:

1. When finished eating, there are three choices: stay in the cafeteria, go to the gym, or go outside on nice days.
2. Students choosing the gym must engage in a physical activity such as basketball or walking.
3. Students must remain seated while in the cafeteria, except to throw away trash.
4. Students will be dismissed by table and are responsible for their own cleanup!
5. No cutting in line.
6. Walk at all times.
7. A pass from a teacher must be obtained before leaving the cafeteria and the pass returned to the teacher.
8. No food or drink is allowed outside the cafeteria.
9. Energy drinks are not allowed.
10. Be sure to get to and from lunch in a timely fashion, using the correct staircase. This allows for smooth transitions for all three grades.
11. Show respect at all times to teachers, cafeteria and custodial staff as well as other students.

### **Bus Information**

Bus Company – First Student (978-827-5103)

Bus transportation to and from school is provided for all students living two (2) miles or more distant. Eligible students **MUST** ride their assigned bus.

Students will not be allowed to ride a different bus without a bus pass. Should a situation arise wherein it becomes necessary to ride a different bus, a note from a parent or guardian must be presented to the Administrative Office in the morning before a bus pass will be issued.

Activity buses designated to transport students who remain for clubs, athletics or other after school activities leave the school Monday through Thursday at 2:45 p.m. for the centers of Ashburnham and Westminster.

All students riding buses are under the direct supervision of the bus driver. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a responsible and appropriate manner and are expected to follow all school rules. Once boarded, students must remain seated until their bus stop. Excessive noise, profanity or any behavior distracting the bus driver or endangering others will not be tolerated. Possession or use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs is prohibited on all AWRSD transportation.

Students violating school and bus safety rules may be denied bus transportation. Buses must not be defaced in any way. The bus driver has the same authority during your transit that your teachers do in the classroom. Continued problems on a bus may lead to assigned seating and/or loss of bus privileges.

Bus trips and Bus Stops are extensions of the school day.

Please refer all bus problems to the administration.

Students and parents should be aware that video cameras have been installed on the school buses and activities on the buses may be recorded to ensure the safety of our student riders.

Rules of bus safety and conduct

- Wait on the sidewalk until the bus stops.
- Don't crowd or push when entering or exiting the bus.
- When waiting for the bus at home or at school, don't approach the bus until it comes to a complete stop.
- When approaching or leaving the bus, look both ways before crossing the street. Cross in front of the bus.
- Do not lean out the window or throw objects out the window.
- Don't litter or eat on the bus.
- Never run between a line of buses.

### **Late Buses**

There is one late bus: departing at 2:45 pm, which you may take to the center of each town if you stay after school for an activity. Students cannot remain in the building after 2:05 pm, unless participating in an activity supervised by a teacher or adult. There is also an athletic late bus that departs between 4:30 and 4:45 pm. Buses run Monday through Thursday. There is not a late bus on Friday.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

### **Interscholastic Sports and Extracurricular Activities Eligibility**

Academics are a priority at Overlook Middle School. Students must pass all of their classes to be eligible for participation in after school programs. Students receiving incompletes will not be allowed to participate until the incomplete is made up.

Ineligibility will be re-assessed at progress report time. If a student is passing all of their classes, they will be removed from the ineligible list.

### **Athletics**

Overlook Middle School presently has several interscholastic sports available to its students.

Interscholastic sports offered include:

- Cross Country
- Boys' Soccer
- Girls' Soccer
- Field Hockey
- Boys' Basketball
- Girls' Basketball
- Spring Track
- Baseball
- Softball

### **Dances**

The Overlook Middle School Spirit Council plans dances each year. These grade level dances are open to all 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who are not on academic or social probation. The dances are usually held on Friday after school between the hours of 2:30 and 5:00 pm. All school rules apply. Admission is charged for these dances with the profits going to school activities. Tickets are sold the week of the dance at all lunches. Tickets are NOT sold at the door but are needed for admission.

### **Special Activities**

Special activities such as field trips and field days can bring the school and the community closer together, which can result in real life experiences that enrich the curriculum for students. The School Committee also encourages special activities as an integral part of the instructional program at Overlook.

The Overlook Middle School will ensure that:

- Special activities are properly supervised;
- Safety precautions are observed;
- Reasonable accommodations are made to promote participation by students with disabilities.

Students participating in special activities must meet certain standards in order to be eligible for such participation. Since academics are a very important aspect of the educational process and special activities are designed to enrich the curriculum, behavior is what will determine student participation. Students who have displayed a polite and respectful attitude, a sense of responsibility, and who are positive representatives of Overlook's student body will be allowed to participate in special activities.

A committee of core teachers, non-core teachers, a school counselor and the administration will review the discipline records before each field trip to determine which students will be allowed to participate. Students and their parents will be notified of their eligibility prior to each special activity.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Office**

Overlook Middle School  
10 Oakmont Drive  
Ashburnham, MA 01430

Telephone: 978-827-1425

FAX: 978-827-1423

Mr. Phillip Saisa, Principal

Mrs. Sandra Rehler, Assistant Principal

Mrs. Jeanne Erickson, Principal's Secretary

### **Telephones**

Phone use is limited to emergency situations and students are to be at the phone only with an authorized pass. Students will not be allowed to use administrative or departmental office phones except in extreme emergency and only with permission of office personnel. We request that parents/guardians avoid calling the school to give messages to their children during the school day unless it is an emergency.

### **Visitors**

Students wishing to bring a guest to school must obtain permission from the administration 24 hours prior to the visit. Written requests from the visitor's parent and school must be submitted 24 hours in advance of the visit. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, guests will be limited to persons who have legitimate business with the school, i.e., those students who are looking at Overlook as a future school choice. Visitors should in no way interfere with the school's program or disrupt the educational process. No visitors will be allowed in September, on days preceding a vacation period, on release days or in June. Overlook will not accept visitors when the visitor's school is in session. Visitors and their sponsor are to report to the Main Office to complete the sign in process and receive a visitor's badge. Visitors who have not checked in with the Administrative Office may be asked to leave the school immediately.

## Parent Observations in Classroom

The Overlook Middle School believes parents are important partners in educating students. To that end, we open our classrooms to parents, or their designee, who want to observe the child in the classroom context. The following criteria below shall be followed when an observation is requested:

- a. All observations must be scheduled through the building principal;
- b. The parent or designee and principal will discuss the parameters of the observation prior to the observation taking place;
- c. The observation must be scheduled on a mutually agreed-upon date with the parent, principal and teacher(s);
- d. The parent or designee must report to the school office (as do all visitors) as part of our safe schools program. Parents or their designee will be directed to the classroom by the administration;
- e. The parent or designee must sign a confidentiality statement so that both the School District and other classroom parents have assurance that information concerning other students' education remains in the classroom and is not discussed in public;
- f. The parent or designee may only observe a classroom in which the parent's child is enrolled and in attendance that day or in a specific program proposed by the School District for the child;
- g. The parent or designee must be a silent observer at all times and not interrupt or disrupt the educational process of the class;
- h. The parent or designee must refrain from using the observation to critique or evaluate teacher performance;
- i. Given the inherently disruptive nature of observations, more than one observation each quarter is strongly discouraged.

### Confidentiality Statement

Parent observers in classrooms, and their designees, are required by Massachusetts state law to maintain confidentiality regarding all information about students in the class. As an observer you will have the opportunity to see students in a variety of interactions. By signing this statement, you are acknowledging your understanding of this confidentiality requirement.

I agree to maintain strict confidentiality regarding information or observations about all other students in the classroom where I am observing.

I further agree that the observation of the child is in no way an evaluation of teacher performance.

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(Parent or Designee Signature)

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(Date)

## **No School Announcements**

If school is to be cancelled, radio stations WEIM (1280 AM) Fitchburg, WTAG (580 AM) Worcester, WXLO (104.5 FM) Worcester, WSRS (96 FM) Worcester, WBZ (1030 AM) Boston; as well as channels 4, 5, and 25 in Boston, will broadcast this information. The Superintendent of Schools will utilize the Connect Ed phone system to announce a cancellation or delay of school. Please do not call the school department.

## **AWRSD Extended Day Unexpected Closings**

In the event of an unexpected school closing, Extended Day will close one-half hour after the closing of JR Briggs and Westminster Elementary.

## **Parent Notification System**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional Schools will use Connect-Ed to facilitate school-to-parent communication in order to notify parents of school events and activities, and to disseminate accurate, time-sensitive critical information in a crisis situation. The system is not intended for use in notifying parents of homework assignments, project due dates, classroom tests or weekly status updates. Parents should notify Overlook as soon as possible if there is a change in their contact information.

## **Parking**

The parking lot is located at the front of the building. No vehicles may be parked in front of school from 7:20-7:40 am or from 1:50-2:10 pm because of bus schedules. Please do not park in the fire lanes.

## **Safe Schools Notice to Parents**

Schools and parents share a common concern and responsibility for the safety of students. Each school year schools encounter problems where students are left remaining after hours unsupervised in school buildings. Students remaining on school grounds must be in a supervised activity. All other students must leave the campus promptly after the dismissal bell. Students are not allowed to wait for other students who are in supervised activities, nor should older students be designated to supervise other students. This practice is unsafe. Furthermore, students exiting one campus should not trespass onto any other school campus. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping all our students safe.

## **Lockers**

You will be assigned a locker for your coat, books and school materials. Only you, your homeroom teacher and the main office will know the combination to your locker. Don't give your combination out and check to be sure that your locker is closed and locked and cleared before leaving. Lockers are school property and should be treated as such. Combination locks are assigned for gym lockers. If you lose your lock, or if it is stolen, you'll have to pay a \$5 replacement fee.

## **Passes**

Students will not be allowed to leave any classroom or activity period without a signed pass from the teacher in charge. Students are to report as quickly as possible to the destination specified on the pass. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in disciplinary action. Any student who abuses the pass system may have that privilege revoked by the administration.

## **Lost and Found**

The school will not assume responsibility for lost or stolen items under any circumstances; lockers and desks are provided as a convenience and are used at the student's own risk. However, lost or stolen items should be reported to the Administrative Office. Items found around the school building are brought to a "lost and found" area. Students may check for lost items in this area; articles not claimed will be disposed of periodically.

## **Conflict Resolution**

One of the main goals that we all share is to provide every student with a quality education. At times we may not agree on the processes used to attain that goal. If, as a parent/guardian, you have a concern that relates to your child and his/her teacher, please use the following guidelines to obtain a resolution:

1. Contact the teacher at school by phone or in person to discuss the problem.
2. If you and/or the teacher feel a resolution to the problem needs further attention, then the team leader should be contacted to schedule a team meeting.
3. In the event that the problem cannot be resolved by Step 2, then the parent should contact the school administration.
4. At this stage, if resolution has not been reached, then the next contact is with the superintendent of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District.

## **Use of School Facilities**

We believe that Overlook is a community resource as well as an institution for learning. We would encourage outside groups to sign up and use the facility. We will do our best to provide a fair and equitable process in assigning facility use. Building use policies are on file at Overlook and the Superintendent's office.

## **PTO Information**

The purposes of the Overlook PTO are to stimulate, inform, and encourage the active participation of parents, teachers, and citizens of Ashburnham and Westminster. The PTO supports the school in creating a learning environment that meets the needs and abilities of all students. It also provides a forum to facilitate communication between parents and teachers. Monthly meetings are held. Check the newsletter for the times and location of monthly meetings.

## **School Council**

Chapter 71 of the School Reform Law of 1993 requires the establishment of school councils in all the public schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The purpose of the school council is to:

- Assist and advise the principals in adopting educational goals for their school.
- Assist and advise the principals in the identification of the educational needs of the students.
- Assist and advise the principals in the review of the annual school budget.
- Assist and advise the principal in the formulation of a school improvement plan.

## **Membership:**

Principal

Co-Chairperson

Assistant Principal

4 Teachers Grades 6-8 elected by Ashburnham-Westminster Teachers Association

4 Middle School Parents (2A, 2W) elected by Overlook Parent Teacher Organization

1 Community Representative -- Westminster

1 Community Representative -- Ashburnham

## **Newsletter**

Overlook Middle School publishes a monthly newsletter to help keep students and parents informed about activities and events that are taking place at Overlook. The newsletter is also on the web page and a hard copy can be obtained in the foyer of the middle school. The newsletter is also mailed out periodically throughout the year.

## **Publication of Student Names**

Periodically, Overlook Middle School publicizes student names for awards, achievement, honors, etc. in the local media. In addition, student work and achievement may be recognized on Overlook's website ([www.awrsd.org/oms](http://www.awrsd.org/oms)). According to District policy, group photos and side profiles may be published on our web page; however, no names shall be linked to a photograph. Work shall be identified by first name and last initial only. Student work shall be understood to be (though not limited to) writing, artwork, and musical pieces. If a parent/guardian does not want his/her child's name or photograph in the media or achievement to appear on our web page, please contact the Overlook main office early in the school year.

## **Media Permission**

At the beginning of the school year a Student Emergency and Health Record Form will be sent home with each student. Parents must indicate under the section entitled "Notification Regarding Student Identification" whether they **GRANT** or **DENY** permission for the child to be filmed, taped, photographed, videotaped or published on the website. If a parent/guardian fails to complete this section, the district will treat the act as a **DENIAL**, until otherwise notified in writing by the parent/guardian. A student list of "denied access by parents" will be kept on file at the school.

## **Movies/Videos/Video Games**

Movies, videos and video games can enhance and enrich the curriculum. The administration will approve the use of the video, movie or video game. If there is a need to use a movie or video rated P-13 or above or a video game rated Teen, teachers will send home a permission note prior to the viewing. The permission slip will include:

- Description of the content of the movie
- The movie's rating
- How the movie is connected to the unit being studied.

## **Web Page Publishing Policy**

Our district has chosen to adopt the following regulations with respect to all of our school web pages.

### Supervision of web pages.

Responsibility for the content of a school's website will rest solely with the building's principal. The principal, at his or her discretion, may select a person, or persons (hereafter referred to as the webmaster) to maintain the school website in a fashion that is consistent with the regulations set forth in this policy.

### Quality of Content

Each school webpage will be designed and maintained in such a way as to meet the following criteria:

1. anything that is on the school webpage will be grammatically correct and free of spelling mistakes
2. the webpage should be well organized, professional in appearance, and offer ease of use for those who visit the site
3. the only links (quick connections to other sites on the World Wide Web) which will be posted on the webpage are those which have been thoroughly checked out by the webmaster and deemed to be of educational value
4. the webpage will not contain ANY links to staff or student homepages

It must be clearly understood that any material submitted for publication (by a student, staff member, or community member) may be accepted or rejected by the building principal on its educational merits and the needs of the school at that point in time.

### Copyright Issues

When student or staff work is published on any school webpage, the webmaster will post a copyright notice prohibiting the copying of this work without written consent. If a webmaster chooses to incorporate material; (text files, graphics, and audio files) from another source on the school webpage, s/he must first obtain a permission form from the copyright owner. The district will furnish each webmaster with a Copyright Permission Form that can be used to garner said permission. Once permission is granted and the material is used, a notice must be placed at the bottom of the school webpage crediting the original producer.

## **Policy Review**

The School Committee will periodically assess the appropriateness of the language contained herein and make any changes to stay current with any technological advances.

## **Computer Use Policy**

There is a district wide computer use policy (see appendixes). . It is important that students have a clear understanding of this policy. Please discuss the document with your child. Students will bring home a computer use policy acknowledgement card which must be signed by both the student and parent. Any violation of the Acceptable Use Policy may result in disciplinary action. This action includes but is not limited to cancellation of computer privileges, and if appropriate, legal action.

## **Electronic devices**

No personal electronics are to be used during the school day. This includes radios, portable disc players, walk-man type radios, boom boxes, pagers, MP3 players (iPod) and cellular phones. Picture or video capable cell phones are prohibited from use anywhere in the school building. The use of this technology for purposes that violate school procedures or personal freedom will result in disciplinary action. All personal electronics are to be stored in lockers and turned off during the school day. Personal electronics in student possession during the school day will be confiscated and returned to the student after school. Subsequent offenses will produce further disciplinary action requiring parental contact. These devices are often the target of theft. The school does not assume any responsibility for the loss or damage to personal electronic devices.

## **Fire Drill/ Building Evacuation**

The purpose of a fire or building evacuation drill is to safeguard students in the event of an actual fire or evacuation. In each classroom instructions are prominently displayed regarding the route to be used in leaving the building during drills. All students are expected to observe the following:

- No talking. Stay with your class.
- Walk swiftly in single file.
- Be attentive. Obey all directions immediately.
- Outside the building move quickly to your assigned location and find your teacher - check in for attendance.
- On the return signal, return to the building in an orderly fashion. Return at once to the room that you left on the fire drill/evacuation signal.

False Alarms: This is a very serious offense. Deliberately causing a false alarm is illegal. The penalty is \$200 plus restitution and suspension from school.

## **Building Security Alert**

In the event of a building security concern a loudspeaker announcement from the administration will be made. Instructions will be given to secure the classrooms.

Teachers will make sure that students are secure in their classrooms with the doors shut and locked and students not visible from doors. Any students in the corridor will be taken into adjacent classrooms upon the alert. Teachers will await further instructions from the administration. If evacuation is necessary follow existing procedures.

### **Administrative Search Policy**

The school administration retains control over lockers loaned to students. The administration therefore has the right and duty to inspect and search students' lockers if the administration reasonably suspects, upon information received from law enforcement officials or other sources, that drugs, weapons, dangerous, illegal or prohibited matter, or goods stolen from school or from members of the staff or student body, are likely to be found therein. The administration also has the right and duty to search a student if there is a high degree of suspicion that drugs, weapons, stolen goods, dangerous, illegal or prohibited material are likely to be found on the student. It is the school's duty to enforce school discipline and to protect the health and safety of the student and/or student body. The items of such search may be turned over to law enforcement officials for inspection or examination and may be the subject of criminal or juvenile court prosecution, or of school disciplinary proceedings.

## **APPENDIXES**

### **Required Applicable State and Federal Statutes**

#### **Massachusetts General Law - Chapter 71: Section 37H½. Delinquency complaint against student; suspension; hearing; expulsion upon conviction; appeal.**

Section 37H ½ Notwithstanding the provisions of section eighty-four and sections sixteen and seventeen of chapter seventy-six:

(1) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent

shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the suspension.

(2) Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the expulsion.

Upon expulsion of such student, no school or school district shall be required to provide educational services to such student.

### **School Reform Law (Section 37H)**

#### **Massachusetts General Law - Chapter 71: Section 37H**

(a) Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(b) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(c) Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal.

After said hearing, a principal may, in his discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(d) Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(e) When a student is expelled under the provisions of this section, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

### **Massachusetts General Laws -- Chapter 269**

Hazing as described by Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 269, Section 17 is prohibited. Participants will be suspended from school for 5 school days. Organizers of the incident will be suspended for 10 school days. All such incidents will be reported to law enforcement authorities for further action.

### **Chapter 269: Section 17. Hazing; organizing or participating; hazing defined.**

Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or any other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating,

branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage or drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

**Chapter 269: Section 18. Failure to report hazing.**

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine or not more than one thousand dollars.

**Chapter 269: Section 19. Copy of secs. 17--19; issuance to students and student groups, teams and organizations; report.**

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the regents of higher education and in the case of secondary schools, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams, or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of regents and, in the case of secondary institution, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

### **An Act Providing For Drug Free Schools**

Effective July 1, 1989, anyone convicted of dealing drugs within 1000 feet of an elementary, vocational or secondary school will face a two-year mandatory prison sentence. It will not matter whether the dealer knew he/she was near a school, whether it is a public or private school or in session at the time of the offense. The law will pertain to drug distributors, manufacturers or persons possessing a controlled substance with intent to distribute it. A fine of up to \$10,000.00 may also be imposed but not in lieu of the two-year term of imprisonment.

### **Massachusetts General Law - Chapter 76: Section 5**

Approved by School Committee Vote January 9, 1996

Every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where he actually resides, subject to the following section. No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

### **Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76, Section 5**

Approved by School Committee Vote January 9, 1996

No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

### **Non-Custodial Parents: Access to School Records**

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 34H, a non-custodial parent may have access to the student record, consisting of information concerning his or her child, including, but not limited to report cards and progress reports, the results of testing, notification of a referral for a special needs assessment, notification of enrollment in an English Language Learner program, absences, illnesses, detentions, suspensions, expulsions, or withdrawal from school, in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a) A non-custodial parent is eligible to obtain access to the student record unless:

1. The parent has been denied legal custody or has been ordered to supervised visitation, based on a threat to the safety of the student and the threat is specifically noted in the order pertaining to custody or supervised visitation, or
  2. the parent has been denied visitation, or
  3. the parent's access to the student or to the custodial parent has been restricted by a temporary or permanent protective order, unless the protective order (or any subsequent order modifying the protective order) specifically allows access to the information contained in the student record, or
  4. there is an order of a Probate and Family Court judge which prohibits the distribution of student records to the parent.
- b) The school shall place in the student's record any documents indicating that a non-custodial parent's access to the student's record is limited or restricted pursuant to 603 CMR 23.07(5)(a).
  - c) In order to obtain access, the non-custodial parent must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal.
  - d) Upon receipt of the request, the school must immediately notify the custodial parent by certified and first class mail, in English and in the primary language of the custodial parent that it will provide the non-custodial parent with access after 21 days, unless the custodial parent provides the principal with documentation that the non-custodial parent is not eligible to obtain access as set forth in 603 CMR 23.07(5)(a).
  - e) The school must delete all electronic and postal address and telephone number relating to either work or home locations of the custodial parent from student records provided to non-custodial parents. In addition, such records must be marked to indicate that they shall not be used to enroll the student in another school.
  - f) Upon receipt of a court order which prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 34H, the school shall notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

**The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District and Overlook Middle School comply with the following state and federal laws**

- **[Title I of the American Disabilities Act](#)**: Prohibits discrimination, exclusion from participation, and denial of benefits on the basis of disability in the areas of employment
- **[Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)**: Prohibits discrimination, exclusion from participation, and denial of benefits on the basis of disability in the areas educational programming and activities
- **[Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)**: Prohibits discrimination, exclusion from participation, and denial of benefits based on race, color, and national origin

- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**: Prohibits discrimination, exclusion from participation, and denial of benefits in educational programs based on sex. Recent landmark pieces of legislation, Chapter 622 of the 1972 Education Amendment, are laws prohibiting discrimination. These are based on the sound premise that in a knowledge-based society, equal opportunities in education are fundamental to equality in all other forms of human endeavor. It is the policy of Overlook Middle School not to discriminate on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, handicap or national origin as in accordance with Chapter 622 of the Massachusetts General Laws, Title IX, of the 1972 Education Amendment and
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**: Prohibits discrimination, exclusion from participation, and denial of benefits based on disability
- **Mass. General Laws, Chapter 76, Section 5**: Prohibits discrimination in all public schools on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, and disability
- **Mass. General Laws, Chapter 265, Section 37**: No person whether or not acting under the color of the law, shall by force or threat of force, willfully injure, intimidate, or interfere with, or oppress or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the constitution or laws of the Commonwealth or by the constitution or laws of the United States.

#### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Eligible parties may peruse any records kept on students at Overlook at any time. There is nothing in the permanent or temporary record, which would not or could not have already been seen by a parent/guardian or student. These records include report cards, midterm reports, letters of commendation, attendance, health records, etc. Upon graduation or leaving Overlook, students may obtain a copy of any record pertaining to said student. Students are requested to sign a statement, which allows Overlook to maintain information in their folders, which could be of value to the student in the future, beyond the five-year limit of this act. Without this permission, school activities, health records, MCAS scores, etc. could not be kept. Whenever a party feels the records are inaccurate that party may, in writing, add their version of the inaccuracy to the record. Additional information regarding these state regulations may be obtained from the Guidance Office.

#### **Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA)**

(Management plan notification in accordance with AHERA regulations 40 CFR 763)

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District must notify building users, in writing, that the AHERA Management Plans of each school will be available for review in the office of the Head Custodian between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. Monday through Friday by appointment.

### **MIAA Regulations: Taunting Rule**

Taunting includes any actions or comments by coaches, players, or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule, or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berates, needles, intimidates, or threatens based on race, gender, ethnic origin, or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs, or personal matters.

Examples of taunting include but are not limited to: "trash talk ", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed by a competitor to an opponent by ridiculing his/her skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or physical response; and physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game, including " in the face " confrontation by one player to another and standing over/straddling a tackled or fallen player.

In all sports, officials are to consider taunting a flagrant un-sportsmanlike foul that disqualifies the offending bench personnel or contestant from that contest/day of competition. In addition, the offender shall be subject to existing MIAA Expulsion Rules. A warning shall be given to both teams by game official prior to the contest.

At all MIAA contest sites and tournament venues, appropriate management may give spectators one warning for taunting. Thereafter, spectators who taunt players, coaches, game officials, or other spectators are subject to ejection.

### **Overlook Computer Use Contract**

I understand and accept that my access to school computers and the Internet is dependent on my commitment to use these resources appropriately as outlined below as well as in the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District Acceptable Use Policy. Inappropriate use of school computers will result in my loss of computer access and/or further disciplinary action.

I understand and accept that the purpose of school computer resources is educational. Specifically, I will not use school computers:

- in furtherance of any illegal act, including violation of any criminal or civil laws or regulations, whether state or federal;
- for any commercial purpose;
- to send threatening or harassing messages, whether sexual or otherwise;
- to access or share sexually explicit, obscene, or otherwise inappropriate materials;
- to infringe any intellectual property rights;
- to gain, or attempt to gain, unauthorized access to any computer or network;

- for any use that causes interference with or disruption of network users and resources, including propagation of computer viruses or other harmful programs;
- to intercept communications intended for other persons;
- to distribute chain letters;
- to access chat rooms, instant messaging, game sites, online gambling sites or other non-educational sites;
- to libel or otherwise defame any person; or
- to plagiarize work found on the Internet.
- for any use that causes interference with or disruption of network users and resources, including propagation of computer viruses or other harmful programs;
- to intercept communications intended for other persons;
- to distribute chain letters;
- to access chat rooms, instant messaging, game sites, online gambling sites or other non-educational sites;
- to libel or otherwise defame any person; or
- to plagiarize work found on the Internet.

I will follow all copyright regulations and will not copy programs, pirate software, engage in hacking, or take or waste computer supplies provided by the school.

I understand that the school district uses software that is designed to restrict access to controversial and inappropriate sites. I will not attempt to disable or otherwise circumvent this Internet filtering software.

I will be polite when writing email messages to others. I will not use inappropriate language. I will not harass or disrupt other users. For my safety I will not give my full name, home address, telephone number or other personal or school information to others.

I recognize the rights of all computer users to privacy. I will not publish personal information about others. I will not use other students' or faculty members' disks, their passwords, or access their private files.

I will not use floppy or zip disks, CD-ROMs, flash drives or other removable media without first obtaining my teacher's permission. I will not attach any peripheral equipment to Overlook equipment without permission.

I understand and agree to Overlook's contract for computer use. I understand that should I break this contract my access to computers will be revoked and disciplinary actions taken.

