

# Amherst Elementary School

Parent/Student Handbook

2023 - 2024

Dr. Amanda Cassise, Principal  
156 Davis Street  
Amherst, VA 24521

434.946.9704 (main office)  
434.946.9706 (FAX)

***“You will go F.A.R. when you are Focused, Accountable & Respectful”***



Home of the Panthers

## **Welcome to Amherst Elementary School**

Please take time to familiarize yourself with the policies and practices explained in this handbook. Working together, we can ensure that all of our students receive a quality education in an environment that is safe, appropriate, and respectful. Your support of our school and its employees is greatly appreciated!

We may be reached by phone, email, or Class DOJO..

### **Office**

Amanda Cassise [acassise@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:acassise@amherst.k12.va.us)  
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### **SRO**

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### **Preschool Special Education**

Kristin Cox [kcox@amherst.k12va.us](mailto:kcox@amherst.k12va.us)

### **Preschool Smart Start**

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### **Kindergarten**

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### **First Grade**

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### **Second Grade**

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### **Third Grade**

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### **Fourth Grade**

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### **Fifth Grade**

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### **Special Education**

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### **ESL**

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### **Reading Specialists (Title I)**

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### **Resource**

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### **Assistants**

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### **Custodians**

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### **Child Nutrition Staff**

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Barbara Johnson [bbjohnson@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:bbjohnson@amherst.k12.va.us)

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The school and community will provide a safe, nurturing environment enabling each child to reach his or her full academic potential. We believe a solid educational foundation will empower students to become responsible, self-reliant citizens.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

We will be recognized as a school of academic excellence. The collaborative efforts of the community and school will ensure that each child becomes a life-long learner.



## **MASCOT**

Panther

## **SCHOOL COLORS**

Blue and White

### **ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Any student who lives in the Amherst Elementary School attendance zone and who has reached his/her fifth birthday on or before September 30<sup>th</sup> may be enrolled once proof of residency is provided.

Younger students may qualify for our preschool special education class. Contact the Office of Student Services 434.946.9341 for more information.

### **ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION**

All students must be registered through electronic registration via Parent Portal for Amherst County Public Schools. Parent/Guardians need to update student information through a web portal that is accessed through the parent account and clicking on the eCollect forms icon on the left hand menu bar. In order to proceed with the electronic registration process, parent/guardians will need to have already set up an account on Parent Portal, or you can contact the school office to receive instructions on how to set up your account and associate your student with that account. You will still be required to provide proof of residency for any address changes.

### **PROOF OF RESIDENCY**

Proof of residency is required for all students who are newly enrolling at any Amherst County Public School. Proof of residency will be required for students entering any transition year including Kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade.

### **BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

A parent or guardian who wishes to enroll a child in the Amherst County Schools for the first time, regardless of the grade, is required to present the child's birth certificate.

#### **SECTION 22.1-3.2 CODE OF VIRGINIA**

A parent or guardian who wishes to enroll a child in Amherst County Public Schools for the first time (with the exception of kindergarten students) must complete a form stating that the student has not been expelled from school attendance at any private or public school for an offense in violation of school board policies relating to weapons, alcohol, or drugs, or the willful infliction of injury to another person.

### **PHYSICAL EXAMINATION / IMMUNIZATIONS**

Within a year prior to entry for the first time to any public kindergarten or to any public elementary school, as deemed by the State Department of Health, a child must have a comprehensive physical examination by a qualified licensed physician. Admission of students without a physical examination is not allowed. In addition, students in grades 1-5 are required to provide a certificate of immunization upon entering any Amherst County Public Schools.

### **WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES**

If a student moves out of the school zone or out of the county, the parent is to notify the school immediately. Upon request from the receiving school, records will be forwarded. The parent or guardian must sign an authorization for the release of confidential information at the school in which their child is being enrolled.

### **OUT-OF-ZONE STUDENTS**

Requests for out-of-zone students to attend Amherst Elementary School must be completed each year between May 1<sup>st</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup> and are to be submitted to the Office of the Principal.

### **SCHOOL HOURS -- 9:05 A.M. – 3:45 P.M. MONDAY through FRIDAY**

Our building opens for students at 8:45 a.m. All students should arrive at school between 8:45 a.m. and 9:05 a.m. ***Students MUST NOT be dropped off at school prior to 8:45 AM or picked up from school after 3:50 PM unless enrolled in the Y program.***

### **YMCA PROGRAM**

Students who arrive before 8:30 a.m. and depart after regular dismissal must be enrolled in the YMCA Program. The program runs Monday through Friday from 6:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:45-6:00 p.m. Rates are available by calling the YMCA. If your child is enrolled in both the Morning and After School Care Program, you are eligible for a discount. To register your child, please call the YMCA at 847-8750.

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES**

-Students arriving by bus will enter at the cafeteria entrance and students arriving by car will enter through the school main entrance.

-Students departing by bus or car will be supervised by staff until they are on the bus, until they are under parent/guardian supervision, or until 3:50 PM – the latest time any car rider may be picked up.

-Parents who transport their children to school should remain in the car rider line and use the traffic circle pattern for dropping off and picking up students. Unless there is a need to come into the building, parents should refrain from coming into the school to pick up or drop off their children during arrival and dismissal time. Vehicles must be parked in the parking lot near the gym at all times. Parking is not permitted in the traffic circle or past the signs that state, **ACPS EMPLOYEE PARKING ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT.**

### **STUDENT RELEASE**

Amherst Elementary students may not leave the school premises with anyone unless permission has been granted by the parent. Parents requesting relatives or friends to take their children out of school should submit written permission to the child's teacher and/or principal. In addition, for safety purposes, these relatives or friends picking up your children must provide **photo identification**. Regular car riders will not be called out of class early except in the case of an emergency.

### **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

Emergency information will be used to contact you should your child become ill or be seriously injured at school. *It is the parent's responsibility to provide complete information and to provide updated information to the school when it becomes available.*

When an illness or injury occurs at school, we make every attempt to immediately contact parents or, if needed, the emergency contacts listed. In the case of an extreme emergency, the child will be transported to the emergency room or family physician's office.

### **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Studies have shown that school attendance is by far the strongest predictor of academic performance. There is also a direct linear relationship between attendance and test scores. Through 20 days missed there is a greater than 1 point decline in test scores in math and three-fourths of a point in reading.

What can you do to help? Try these strategies to make school attendance a priority and help your student stay engaged in school:

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school every day.
- Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

### **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**

Every parent/guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child within the compulsory attendance age shall be responsible for such child's regular and punctual attendance at school as described in § [22.1-254.1](#) of the Code of Virginia. Amherst County Public Schools believes that school attendance is directly related to academic achievement and to the development of good attendance habits that are important as students enter adulthood. Optimum student attendance is a collaborative effort, and Amherst County Public Schools expects parents and students to take active roles in accepting that responsibility. One of the characteristics of a good school program is that students want to come to school. We hope each day's instructional program is rich enough that if a student

misses one day then they have missed some important learning. For this reason, ACPS strictly enforces the Code of Virginia requirements for attendance through the following policy:

For each day the student is absent, the parent must provide a written note. Excused absences will only be granted for specific reasons:

- medical or mental health concern or appointment verified by a doctor's note
- an approved school-sponsored event (example: 4-H events)
- death or serious injury in the immediate family
- personal required court appearances with documentation from the court
- extenuating circumstances approved by Principal
- **Students may only miss ten school days with a parent's note. After the tenth excused absence, a doctor's note will be required for each time that a student is absent.**
- Vacations while school is in session will not constitute justification for an excused absence. In order to be considered excused with permission to make up missed assignments, absences must be pre-arranged a minimum of 10 school days in advance with the principal and will be considered very carefully on an individual basis. Please plan vacations during school holidays.
- Absences will be **unexcused** if notes signed by the parent, guardian, or medical professional are **NOT RECEIVED** by the school within **three days** of returning to school.
- Notes for student absences may be sent via email or fax:
  - [jdowdy@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:jdowdy@amherst.k12.va.us)
  - [kmoorefield@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:kmoorefield@amherst.k12.va.us)
  - (434) 946-9706 (fax)

### **CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

Students are chronically absent when they have missed 10% of school **for any reason**. This includes excused absences, doctor's appointments, trips, suspensions, etc.

**Please note that your student's consistent attendance directly affects their academic success and the ability for Amherst Elementary School to remain accredited.**

### **TARDIES AND EARLY DISMISSAL**

Two of the most important times during an instructional day are first thing in the morning, when students are settling in and preparing for learning and the last minutes of the afternoon, when the day is being summarized and learning is being solidified. Therefore, please ensure your child arrives punctually and does not leave early unless it is absolutely necessary. Students are encouraged to arrive at school at 8:45 a.m. The instructional day begins promptly at 9:05 am. If you bring your child to school, and he/she

arrives after 9:05 a.m., **you must come to the main office to sign in.** Your child will be counted tardy and be given a pass in which to report to their class. Students are expected to remain at school until 3:45 p.m.

Excessive tardies and early dismissals will be monitored and addressed by the principal or his designee.

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Students are expected to care for Chromebooks, textbooks, library books, and any equipment or materials at their disposal. If items entrusted to a student's care are lost or damaged, a fee may be charged.

### **INSURANCE**

Student accident insurance may be purchased by the parent/guardian. Insurance information can be obtained in the school lobby. Enrollment is handled directly by the parent/guardian with the company.

### **RETURNED CHECK SERVICE CHARGE**

When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us to use information from the check to make a one-time electronic fund transfer from your account or to process the payment as a check transaction. You authorize us to collect a fee through electronic fund transfer from your account if your payment is returned unpaid.

### **MONEY BROUGHT TO SCHOOL**

Students bringing money to school for lunch, field trips, fundraisers, and any other purposes should do so by securing it in a sealed envelope. The student's name, teacher's name, amount of money, and purpose for the money should be written on the envelope. Students should bring only the amount of money needed for that school day. Students should keep their money with them at all times and not announce to other students on the bus or at school that they are carrying money. Money should not be left in unattended desks, coats, or lunch boxes. Students should not give money to their peers.

### **MONDAY FOLDERS**

Student folders are sent home each Monday. All notices, communications, and weekly reports are included in this folder. Remember to ask your child for his/her folder each Monday!

### **CALENDAR/NEWSLETTER**

A school calendar will be sent home at the beginning of the year. This calendar will be updated throughout the year and can be accessed on the Amherst Elementary website. A school newsletter will be sent home in students' Monday folders weekly or through classroom digital communication such as class DOJO.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

Students should take all possessions and assignments home with them on a daily basis. Once students have left the building by bus or car, they will not be able to return to school to retrieve their assignments or possessions.

### **INVITATIONS/GIFTS**

Parents should not send invitations to parties to be distributed at school, unless every student in the classroom is given one. Invitations will not be distributed to select few students as this causes hurt feelings amongst students.

**Non-instructional items such as, but not limited to, flowers and gifts, should not be sent/brought to school to be delivered to students.**

### **REPORT CARDS & INTERIMS**

You may see up-to-date grade information using the Parent Portal and PowerSchool App. Report cards are sent home at the end of each nine weeks with interim reports sent midway through each nine weeks.

<u>Interims</u>	<u>Report Cards</u>
September 18, 2023	October 27, 2023
December 1, 2023	January 19, 2024
February 20, 2024	March 29, 2024
May 3, 2024	June 1, 2024

### **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

We hope a team approach to communication will begin at registration day and continue throughout the year. Student learning is enhanced when parents and teachers partner and work together to promote learning. Conferences are scheduled at the end of grading periods to discuss student progress; however, they may be scheduled any time throughout the year. Please contact teachers or the principal to schedule conferences as needed outside of the assigned conference window.

### **PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION**

Amherst Elementary Parent Teacher Organization needs the support and participation of every parent and teacher. Meetings will be held throughout the year. Please plan to join us for these very important meetings – we need your involvement.

### **PARENT AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS**

The Amherst County Public Schools Volunteer Program is a community based volunteer program that allows community members the opportunity to give back to their school community. ACPS values and promotes the active engagement of the community in our schools. The program allows volunteers to assist with duties such as main office coverage, recess duty, lunch duty, as well as other various activities. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please complete the Volunteer Program Registration Form

on the ACPS website. If you have questions, please contact the Human Resources Office at 434-943-9376 or by email at [hr@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:hr@amherst.k12.va.us).

### **SCHOOL CONCERNS**

Parents should direct concerns about their children to the specific teachers involved. Please call in advance or send a note with your child for an appointment. **Teachers cannot conduct parent conferences during instructional times.** Teachers will not discuss other students due to confidentiality. The principal is available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. Conferences may be held as necessary. Parents are welcome and encouraged to bring concerns, ideas, and suggestions.

### **MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT RECORDS**

Amherst Elementary School maintains a cumulative record on each of its students in grades K-5. This record contains scholastic and attendance information and may contain special education and Title I Reading information. All parents have the right to review their child's scholastic records.

In addition to the rights to inspect and review a student's education record, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires the following:

1. The parent may request the amendment of the student's education record to ensure that it is not misleading, inaccurate, or in violation of the student's privacy or other rights.
2. The parent must consent before disclosures or personally identifiable information is released to other parties except to the extent FERPA permits disclosure without consent.
3. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, all parents, even those not having custody of their children, have the right to see their child's educational record.

To request information concerning your child's scholastic record, contact Dr. Amanda Cassise, Principal.

### **FOOD SERVICES – CAFETERIA**

Breakfasts and lunches are provided in the school cafeteria for those who are in need of meals. All students will be provided meals daily, if needed, at no cost.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

**FULL DAY CLOSING:** In the event that schools are closed for the full day(s), local news media and ACPS website and social media pages will disperse information prior.

**EARLY DISMISSAL:** In the event that it becomes necessary to close school after the day has begun, bus drivers and parents/guardians will be notified of the closing

by the local news media and ACPS website and social media pages will disperse information as early as possible. Working parents/guardians should make arrangements for their child's early school dismissal.

**DELAYED OPENING:** Local news media and ACPS website and social media pages will disperse information stating that the school opening is delayed. This information should serve as an alert to all to keep listening. Sometimes a two-hour delay can be changed to a closed day, depending on the weather conditions. **Breakfast is NOT served at school on days that are TWO-HOUR delayed.**

### **STUDENT DRESS CODE**

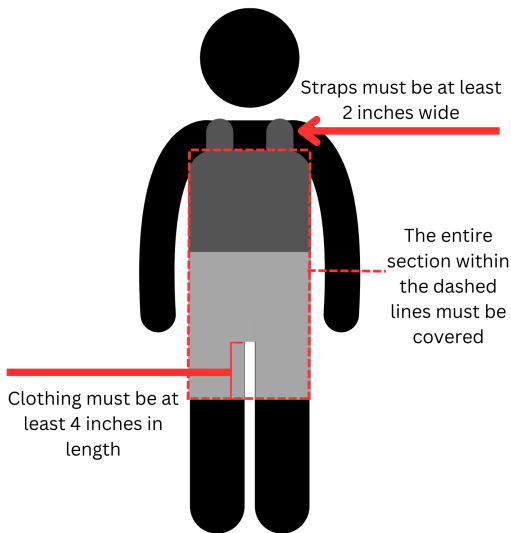
Amherst County Public Schools has developed standards for student dress in order to prepare students for future success as well as to create a safe and orderly learning environment. Amherst County Public Schools respects the differences of all students and does not discriminate based on sex, race, color, national origin, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, ancestry, marital or parental status, or other factors. Amherst County Public Schools will rely on parents and guardians to use good judgment in their selection of clothing for their students.

Students must wear clothing from below the armpits to four inches below the upper thigh. Tops must have shoulder straps that are at least two inches wide. This clothing must include shirts, pants, shorts, skirts, dresses, etc., and must also include shoes. All areas of the torso should be covered within this area.

The following clothing/attire is prohibited:

1. Any attire that has images or language that is vulgar in nature, profane, or offensive.
2. Any attire or accessories (including jewelry) that denotes membership in a gang that advocates illegal, violent, or disruptive behavior. (Including trademarks, symbols, or other images and language)
3. Any attire that promotes illegal activity, violence, or the use of drugs or alcohol.
4. Any attire causes or is likely to cause a substantial disturbance or disruption of the learning environment.
5. Attire that does not cover the torso from below the armpits
6. Any attire that causes or is likely to cause a safety concern.
7. Hats, hoods, and other headwear are not permitted inside of ACPS buildings unless permitted for religious, medical, or other reasons approved by the administration.
8. Pajamas and bedwear are prohibited (including slippers).

The administration at individual schools reserves the right to determine what clothing/attire meets the above requirements. Students who do not adhere to the above requirements will need to change their clothing/attire to meet the requirements. Parents will be contacted for students who are unable to change clothes to appropriate attire.



### **STUDENT HEALTH**

Amherst Elementary School will follow all health and safety practices, guidelines and regulations defined by Amherst County Public Schools.

### **MEDICATIONS**

#### **PRESCRIPTIONS:**

Amherst County Public School personnel may give prescription medication to students only with a licensed prescriber's written order or current prescription and signed request from parent/guardian. Such medication must be in the original container. The label on the box/bottle must include:

Child's name	Doctor's name
Time to be given	Dosage amount
Name of medication	Reason for taking

#### **NON-PRESCRIPTIONS:**

Amherst County Public School personnel may give nonprescription medication to students only with written permission from the parent/guardian. Such permission shall include the name of the medication, the required dosage, and the time the medication is to be given. Such medication must be in the original container. In order for non-prescription medication to be given to a student

beyond five consecutive days, written permission from the child's physician shall be required. Dosages may not exceed that recommended by the manufacturer unless accompanied by a licensed treating physician's order specifying that the recommended dosage of the manufacturer is to be exceeded on the physician's instructions.

Except in rare instances and under a written order from a physician, a student may not administer drugs or medications to himself/herself. Medication to be used at school must be delivered to (and picked up from) the school by the parent and not transported with students on the bus.

**Students should take the first dose of a new medication at home so that their family can monitor them for side effects.**

### **SCHOOL SAFETY**

The issue of school safety is a shared concern. It is essential that communities, parents, educators, and students work together to develop a disciplined environment where learning can take place. We are committed to keeping school safety a primary focus. We believe students must feel secure and reside in a safe environment. We welcome all concerns regarding the following procedures.

#### **Our Campus**

- All parents, volunteers, and visitors are required to sign in whenever students are present and must wear a visitor's identification badge. We ask that you call ahead and schedule an appointment with our office.
- All entrance doors are locked to prevent unauthorized entry. Guests must request entry using the intercom located outside the main entrance.
- No one other than a legal guardian or authorized person may pick up a student unless a written note, signed by the legal guardian, is furnished and the authorized person provides photo identification. If a child wishes to go home with another child, parents of the child must send a permission note to school.
- If you find it necessary to make afternoon transportation changes, please contact us via phone immediately to ensure students are aware of changes before dismissal.
- We cannot guarantee transportation changes, but will do our best to assist in case of emergency.
- The building is equipped with a security system.
- Several telephone lines serve the school and each classroom has a telephone.
- Safety audits are conducted annually.
- The building is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. At least one custodian is on duty during this time.

- The Amherst County Police Department routinely canvases the campus.

#### **Our Students**

- Students are expected to practice good citizenship and treat peers and adults with respect.
- Positive discipline plans are established within each classroom.
- Group guidance and individual counseling on topics of anger management, conflict resolution, and social skills are available to students.

#### **Our Faculty and Staff**

- School personnel wear identification badges.
- Designated first responders have been trained for medical emergency assistance.
- A Crisis Intervention Plan has been developed; a Crisis Team is a component of this plan.
- OSHA Safety Training is provided annually.
- A school health assistant is provided on-site.
- Staff supervises students at all times during the school day.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT INFORMATION**

The entire student Code of Conduct can be found on the Amherst County Public Schools; website at [www.amherst.k12.va.us](http://www.amherst.k12.va.us) under the parents/students tab.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Educational research suggests that the most important contributor to student achievement is a focused academic environment that is free from disruptions. The faculty and staff of Amherst Elementary set high expectations for student behavior. Our school rules/expectations are:

1. **Be safe.**
2. **Be respectful.**
3. **Make good choices.**

Additionally, each classroom teacher may have an individual classroom discipline plan which includes general rules and is specific to the needs of the individual classroom. Classroom discipline plans should also incorporate rewards for appropriate behavior and consequences for infractions. Some infractions are extremely severe in nature and warrant immediate intervention from the office. These infractions include, but are not limited to:

1. Fighting
2. Possession of weapons/facsimiles
3. Possession of tobacco/alcohol
4. Destruction of school property
5. Threats

### **CLASSROOM TEACHER**

#### **DISCIPLINE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each teacher at Amherst Elementary School has the following responsibilities with respect to discipline:

1. To provide every student with the right to obtain an education in an orderly classroom.
2. To make students aware of rules and regulations and why such rules and regulations are necessary.
3. To maintain a high degree of fairness and consistency in carrying out disciplinary procedures.
4. To have a positive approach in all disciplinary actions.
5. To explain to students who violate rules why their behavior is unacceptable.
6. To inform parents of serious discipline problems or repeated violations of rules.
7. To develop with parents an understanding that good discipline habits must be taught and reinforced in the home.

Each classroom teacher is expected to handle his/her own discipline problems. If a student reaches the final consequence or commits a serious offense, the child will be referred to the principal.

When a child is referred to the principal, the following discipline procedures will be followed:

1. The parent will be notified in writing or by phone.
2. The principal will conference with the child and give him/her a chance to tell his/her version of the incident.
3. If the child has repeatedly violated rules, injured another child, or committed a serious infraction of the rules, one or more of the following may occur:
  - a. The parent will be required to pick the child up at school.
  - b. The child will be separated from other children for the remainder of the day.
  - c. The child may not return to school until the parent meets with the teacher and the principal. During the conference, a plan of improvement will be developed.
  - d. The child will be suspended from school.

### **TECHNOLOGY DEVICES**

Students may not use or have cell phones, iPods, iPads, or any other electronic device during school due to the interruption they cause to the learning environment. Having out or using these devices may result in disciplinary consequences. The school will not be responsible for these devices if they are lost or stolen.

#### **Chromebook Care & Replacement Costs**

To clean your Chromebook:

- Shut down and power off Chromebook. Use a dry, clean microfiber cloth to wipe it.
- If there is still dirt, use a small amount of water (very lightly damp) and wipe the Chromebook.
- If dirt persists, use a small amount of water with one small drop of dish soap, very lightly dampen a wipe, and wipe the Chromebook.



Chromebooks should remain in the cases provided to students to provide protection during normal use and transporting to and from school

Lost or accidental damage requiring repair = \$50

Lost or damaged Charger/Case = \$10

### **USE OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND/OR VAPE PRODUCTS**

Amherst Elementary is a safe place for children and for the community.

- Police and/or juvenile authorities shall be contacted when illegal drugs are discovered on school grounds.
- Any student who is found guilty of distributing illegal drugs while under the jurisdiction of the Board or on school property shall be immediately suspended for ten days with a recommendation being made to the Superintendent of Schools for his/her suspension from school.
- Any student enrolled in public schools who is found carrying, consuming, and/or selling any drugs, alcohol, unknown substance, or other mind-altering substance on school property at any time when school is in session or at any school activity or on any teacher-chaperoned student trip will be subject to immediate expulsion. This also pertains to any student who attends any school-sponsored activity after consuming any alcoholic beverage or drug or other mind-altering substance. The loss of participation in all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year will accompany the above penalty.
- Tobacco and/or vape products are not allowed on school property.

### **WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Students are not permitted to bring to school weapons or objects/toys that resemble weapons. This includes water guns, all knives, and nail clippers. State laws set forth strict guidelines regarding weapons on school property (State Statute 18.2-308.1). If a student violates this code, the incident will be referred to law enforcement to determine possible criminal charges.

### **STUDENT SEARCHES**

Under School Board regulations, desks and/or backpacks may be inspected if the administration has reason to suspect the presence of articles or materials injurious to the best interest of the school or suspects the presence of other harmful substances which are likely to pose a threat to the maintenance of discipline and order in the school.

### **BULLYING**

Bullying is repeatedly making fun of, embarrassing, or scaring another person. A student, either individually or as a part of a group, shall not harass or bully others.

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, ongoing physical intimidation, taunting, name-calling, insults, and any combination of prohibited activities. Prohibited conduct includes ongoing verbal conduct consisting of comments regarding the race, gender, religion, physical abilities or characteristics, or associates of the targeted person.

If a bullying situation is identified, parents of the bully and victim will be notified of the ongoing issue by teacher, school counselor, or principal.

We believe several points are important as we address bullying at Amherst Elementary. First, to educate all staff members on recognizing and addressing bullying to ensure the behavior stops. Second, to explicitly teach students what bullying is and ways to respond if they are bullied. Third, to address any bullying issues that arise with individual students and their parents when needed. Fourth, we encourage students to communicate with school personnel immediately when a bullying situation occurs so that it can be addressed in a timely manner. Finally, to empower all students to stand up and address students that are bullying even if they are not the ones being bullied.

### **TORNADO, FIRE, AND LOCKDOWN DRILLS**

To be prepared for a real crisis, we practice procedures for such disasters as tornado, fire, and unwarranted intrusions into the building (lockdown). A fire drill will be held within the first 10 days of school and once a month thereafter. We require students to walk quietly and quickly with their teachers to their designated areas outside the building. Once each child is accounted for and the situation has been assessed, the students return with their teachers in the same quiet manner to resume instruction. Safety and security for each student will be the primary focus during these practice drills.

A tornado drill occurs in the spring when tornado season is most prevalent. Two lockdown drills are held during the first 20 days of school and one each semester thereafter.

### **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Most of our school buses transport sixty or more students to and from school. The bus driver is required to direct all his/her attention to driving the bus and ensuring each child arrives at his/her intended destination safely. Distraction caused by student misbehavior endangers the lives of all those riding on the bus. Bus discipline is a matter of prime concern for us because of the potential harm that may result to students.

Students are transported daily at public expense. The bus driver is in full charge of the bus and the students riding the bus.

Each student rides a bus to which he/she is regularly assigned. Permission slips written by the parent or guardian and signed by the principal or designee are required before a student is allowed to ride an alternate bus.

**To ensure the safety of all students, it is School Board policy that all elementary students must be met by someone of middle school age or older at the bus stop.** Students will be returned to school and parents will be required to come pick up their children if there is no one present to meet the bus.

### **BUS RULES AND REGULATIONS**

1. Students shall remain seated.
2. Students will not fight or use obscene language.
3. Students will keep heads, hands, arms, etc. and belongings inside the bus.
4. Students will not eat or drink on the bus.
5. Students will not litter.
6. Vandals will pay for bus damage.
7. Students will be at loading and unloading places on time.
8. Students must use the same loading and unloading place unless they have a note from their parents, cosigned by their principal or designee.
9. Students must cross the street 10 to 15 feet in front of the school bus.
10. Students may only ride on the bus that they are assigned by the Division Superintendent or his duly authorized agent.
11. Students are not permitted to cross a dual highway when loading or unloading from a school bus.
12. Students will not obstruct the aisle or exits with any objects.
13. Students riding buses must wear face masks during the duration of their ride. One student per seat unless seated with a sibling from their household
14. Cellular phones may be used by students being transported on ACPS buses and vans. Students may use their phones to send text messages, access social media, access the internet, listen to music, or watch videos. Students are required to utilize earbuds or headphones when viewing videos or listening to music. Students are not allowed to make phone calls, record images or sound, or take pictures. All content being accessed must be within the guidelines of the ACPS acceptable use policy. Students must not wear earbuds or headphones while boarding or disembarking the school bus or while crossing the road in front of the school bus.

### **INSTRUCTION**

Amherst County Public Schools use the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) to guide and improve academic achievement for all of our students. Students take SOL tests in the core areas in third, fourth, and fifth grades.

To prepare students, the school division has aligned the curriculum and designed pacing guides to ensure that all SOL objectives are taught before testing. Classroom instruction, homework, and assessments reflect the knowledge students are expected to know to perform well on the SOL tests.

**\*Students and/or their parents may request for the reconsideration of any learning resource utilized with the curriculum. Policy KLB and KLB-E should be used when providing this request to the school principal.**

### **CURRICULUM GUIDES**

Amherst County has created and implemented the use of curriculum guides for math, English, science, and social studies. These curriculum guides have been developed, at the division level, to guide our teachers in teaching the SOL objectives. In order for us to document students' progress and provide remediation and intervention to those students in need, students will be given periodic assessments throughout the school year and results will be used to improve instruction and determine which students need remediation.

### **GRADING SCALE**

Our teachers will be using a 10-point grading scale when grading students' work in grades 2-12. Another change includes students earning a minimum of two grades per week, per content area.

Scale	Symbol
98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

### **GRADING AND ATTENDANCE**

It is the responsibility of the student to see the teacher on the day he or she returns to school to receive assignments and schedule make-up work. All work must be completed within five school days from the return to school. When a

student is absent, if a parent requests, assignments are to be available at the school by the end of the next school day. Students are required to complete make-up work regardless of the reason for an absence.

**Students will be graded in two grading categories this school year as follows:**

- **Mastery of Content (60%)**
- **Measure of Progress (40%)**

### ZEROES

If a student willfully refuses to complete and turn in assigned work within a reasonable timeframe, a grade of zero may be given. Parents will be notified when work completion becomes a problem. The teacher will seek to determine the cause of the student's failure to complete assigned work and will make multiple attempts to have the student complete the work. If a student's failure to turn in work is justified, it may be turned in late with an appropriate grade assigned.

### HOMEWORK POLICY

The following policy was adopted by the Amherst County School Board and is in effect for all the county schools. A major goal of the instructional program is to assist students in becoming committed to the process of learning. Learning is not restricted to the classroom, but is a continuous process. The individual school can only teach a small portion of that which is valuable and available to be learned. More importantly, the school may stimulate, with the student, the thirst for knowledge and the desire to pursue solutions to problems. The home is a vital partner in this process and a systematic approach to homework can assist the teacher, parent, and student in achieving common learning goals.

The basic objective for any homework assignment is the reinforcement and application of previously learned concepts and skills. Homework assignments should be structured to reinforce and apply that which has been introduced and explained in the classroom.

Homework can provide an essential link between school and home. One measure of a program is the quality of the work done at home by the student. A strong home-school partnership can be greatly enhanced by an established homework program. Homework should be an important tool in developing independent thought, self-direction, and self-discipline. It can assist the student in developing good work habits and time management.

Guidelines for homework include:

- Homework should only be prescribed after the introduction and thorough explanation of the skills necessary to successfully complete the assignment.

- Homework should be assigned in such a manner that it will be clearly understood by all students.
- Homework should serve a valid purpose and be closely related to current classroom activities.
- A student's access to resource materials should be considered when making assignments.
- Homework should be evaluated promptly and returned to the student. Appropriate rewards should be given to those students who successfully complete assigned work. Effort should be recognized as well as competency.
- Teachers should seek to determine the cause if a student regularly fails to do assigned work. Teachers should not avoid giving homework because they believe students will not do the work.
- Excessive homework should be avoided.
- Homework should never be used for disciplinary purposes.
- Teachers and administrators should take appropriate steps to communicate the school division's policy with parents and solicit their support.

Kindergarten: 15 minutes

Grades 1 & 2: 30 minutes

Grades 3 & 4: 45 minutes

Grade 5: 60 minutes

### ACADEMIC RECOGNITION & AES AWARDS

Awards Assemblies will be presented twice a year at the end of each semester. There will be separate assemblies for grades K-2 and 3-5.

Awards will be given for attendance and academics. Academic awards include consistent effort and outstanding academics. Additional awards may be presented for Science Fair, Art, PE, etc. as appropriate.

### BALANCED ASSESSMENT PLAN

According to the Code of Virginia, all students (grades 3-8 and high school) in Virginia Public Schools are required to be assessed in certain academic areas through Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments. Parents may find more information about these assessments and others, as well as a sample SOL opt-out form in the ACPS Balanced Assessment Plan available on the division website under Assessment.

### STATE TESTING PROCEDURES

Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will take SOL tests to determine their levels of proficiency in English, math, science and/or social studies. Testing takes place in May.

You may help your child prepare for these tests by:

\*Encouraging him/her to take school work seriously each day by being good listeners and asking questions.

\*Insisting that he/she reads daily at home.

\*Helping him/her memorize basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. These facts are the cornerstones of more sophisticated math skills/concepts.

\*Insisting he/she complete homework assignments.

\*Maintaining regular contact with teachers.

### **VVAAS**

VVAAS is a new individualized report of your child's SOL testing history. With this report, you can learn about your child's SOL performance over time and any patterns that may be present in your child's testing history. It is available for students in grades 3-12 and can be accessed through our [PowerSchool Parent Portal: https://amherst.psisjs.com/public/home.html](https://amherst.psisjs.com/public/home.html)

### **PALS ASSESSMENT**

All students participate in the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS). PALS testing is administered to all students in grades K-5 in the fall as a benchmark. PALS teachers work with classroom teachers to provide additional assistance for students who do not perform up to the benchmark standards in grades K-3. Students in grades K-5 are reassessed mid-year, as needed, and in the spring.

### **ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT**

Second grade students participate in additional formal assessments each year to determine whether they are performing up to their individual abilities and if screening for the Talented and Gifted Program may be necessary.

### **RETENTION**

The decision to retain a child in a grade should be mutually agreed upon by the parents, teacher, and principal. We use multiple criteria while taking into consideration the following factors: the student's academic progress; maturity; attendance; age; prior retention; learning issues; results from the Virginia Standards of Learning tests; and other factors specific to the student. Final decision for retention rests with the Retention Committee composed of the principal and instructional staff at Central Office.

Parents will be notified in writing at the beginning of the third nine weeks if their child is being considered for retention due to the lack of mastering the required skills to be promoted at the end of that school year.

### **INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT TEAM (IST)**

An IST Committee is composed of staff from Amherst Elementary to assist teachers with students having difficulty in the classroom. These difficulties may stem from academic, emotional, behavioral, or physical concerns. Students are referred to the committee by a teacher, other faculty member, or parent. Teachers and parents are given strategies to accommodate the child. If the child continues to demonstrate a lack of progress in any of the areas mentioned above, a recommendation will be

made by the committee for further investigation to determine solutions and resources for student success.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

Students who are referred to IST may qualify for special education services through an eligibility hearing. This is conducted by Central Office personnel with principal, teacher, and parental involvement throughout the process. Students who qualify will be enrolled in a special education class and receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Personnel for Amherst County Public Schools also visit Amherst Elementary to provide services for students needing interventions in vision, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

### **TITLE I SCHOOL-WIDE PROGRAM**

Title I is a federally funded program available at our elementary schools that is designed to provide extra support to students who are performing below grade level expectations in their reading. ACPS works to provide parents ways to support students in their learning, as outlined in each school's Parental Involvement Policy. More information about this policy, the Title I program, and parent's rights can be found on our website

### **TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Amherst Elementary School is committed to encouraging parental involvement in the Title I Program. The following activities are provided for parental involvement in the Title I Program:

- Amherst Elementary Parent Advisory committee meets 2-3 times a year. The committee is composed of parents, reading specialist, principal, and teacher.
- Parents of each student selected to participate in the Title I Program are notified and an explanation of services through the program is provided.
- An open house and/or workshops are provided annually to assist parents in promoting the education of their children at home.
- A parent center is set-up in each school for parents and students. Parents are invited to check out materials to use with their children at home.
- Title I parents are given the opportunity to evaluate the Title I program yearly and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Newsletters containing program information and suggestions for parents are sent home 4 times during the year. Information for the newsletter comes from the schools and Parent Advisory Committee members.
- Title I students receive Progress Reports each nine weeks. Parents are asked to sign the reports and return them to school.

## **RESOURCE INSTRUCTION**

In addition to the regular education and special education programs, students participate in the following resource classes:

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION** – Physical education instruction integrates Health and Physical Education SOL into the program. Students explore archery, basketball, rhythmic movements, soccer, physical fitness, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, games, movement education, manipulative activities, and good sportsmanship. To ensure safety, students should wear tennis shoes on days when they have PE.

**MUSIC** – Students PreK through fifth grade are provided with general music instruction which integrates elementary music SOL and some core SOL into the music curriculum. Students learn basic music skills and theories through movement, songs, listening activities, instruments, and other hands-on activities. Students also develop an interest in music and the ability to express themselves musically.

**ART** - At AES, we incorporate the art methodology of T.A.B. (Teaching for Artistic Behavior). The art teacher serves as a facilitator/coach by presenting big ideas or specific skills to help students develop artistic abilities.

**ENRICHMENT** – The enrichment specialist works with students in the TAG (Talented and Gifted) program, as well as co-teaches enrichment lessons in classrooms when possible.

### **SCHOOL COUNSELING**

Our school counselor is readily available to assist students, parents, and staff by:

- teaching guidance lessons to classes as needed on important topics such as social skills, good character traits, bullying prevention, etc.
- conducting small group and individual sessions with students geared toward their specific needs
- communicating with families in an effort to help meet student needs by providing in-school support and outside resources when necessary
- working hand-in-hand with parents to understand attendance policies and help create a plan to improve attendance when needed
- helping 5th grade students prepare for the middle school transition
- teaming up with staff to problem solve and create a safe and successful learning environment for all students

**LIBRARY** – A full-time library/media specialist provides instruction in library skills and literature appreciation while integrating core SOL into the library curriculum. Classes visit the library/media center at least once each week for instruction, as well as an opportunity to check out materials. Students are also invited to visit the library to return library books and select additional books to

checkout during the morning. Books are normally checked out for one week and are due the next week at the student's regularly scheduled library period. Books may be renewed. If a book is more than two weeks overdue, a note will be sent home with the student's interim report and/or report card. This notice is just a reminder to the student and parent to keep looking for the library book. If after several months the book is still missing, a replacement fee will be required. If the book is later found within the same school year, your money will be refunded. Books that are returned that can no longer be circulated due to damage will also require a replacement fee. Damage is most often created by pets or food/beverage accidents. This fee is based on the replacement cost of the book.

## **GIFTED EDUCATION**

Amherst County Public Schools offers a Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program that recognizes the special academic needs of high achieving and talented students. Students may be referred to the TAG Program by a teacher, parent, peer, or self-referral. Several different criteria are used for eligibility into the TAG Program. Each school has an eligibility committee that evaluates the criteria. Areas of identification are: General Intellectual Aptitude K-12, Specific Aptitude K-12, and Visual or Performing Arts 9-12.

## **DARE INSTRUCTION**

A specially trained uniformed officer from the Amherst County Sheriff's Department provides instruction in Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). The DARE curriculum will be taught in fourth grade. These lessons require up to an hour of interactive instruction once a week for 10 weeks.

## **FAMILY LIFE**

Amherst County Public Schools has a Family Life curriculum based on state guidelines. Parents are invited to preview and discuss the specific grade level objectives with the teacher. Parents who wish for their child to opt out of the program must specify this desire in writing to the classroom teacher.

## **SCHOOL QUALITY PROFILES**

School Quality Profiles are online reports that provide parents with a way to review the status and achievements of Virginia's public schools. This information can be accessed at <https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/>.

## **ATSS**

ATSS stands for Amherst Tiered Systems of Supports. It is a data-driven decision-making framework for establishing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports

needed for the school to be an effective learning environment for all students.

**Essentials elements of the ATSS framework are:**

- Aligned organizational structure
- Data-informed decision-making
- Evidence-based practices
- Family, school and community partnerships
- Monitoring student progress
- Evaluation of outcomes and fidelity

**RECESS**

Every student will have recess as part of the instructional day. At times, part of recess may be used for other purposes such as completion of work or consequences related to misbehavior.

**FIELD TRIPS**

The teacher, with the approval of the principal, schedules field trips after their educational values have been established. Parents must sign a permission form and a medical release form before a student takes a field trip. Students whose behavior at school is inappropriate may not be permitted to participate in field trips.

Chaperones for field trips must accompany the students on any chartered bus trips. Chaperones will be responsible for students assigned to them and, therefore, should not bring any children other than those officially participating in the trip.

At times, charges may be made for field trips or specific programs. Provisions are made for students with special financial needs. Please contact the principal if provisions are needed.

**School board practice requires that chaperones be fingerprinted prior to working with or supervising children. Please contact the Office of Human Resources at 434.946.9376 for further details.**

**PARENT TIPS**

READ to your child. Every time you read to your child, you are building his/her appreciation of books and reading. A child who has been read to is usually more willing to read to himself.

1. HELP your child with his/her reading. Tell him/her words if he/she is in the beginning stages of reading. Help your child to work out the word if he/she is in a later stage by:
  - a. Looking at the picture

- b. Skipping over the unknown word and reading the rest of the sentence to see if context helps with word identification.
  - c. Checking to see whether the word makes sense in the sentence.
2. BUILD a reading atmosphere at home. Have books, magazines, and newspapers around the house and let your child see you reading frequently. Tune into worthwhile programs on TV. Your child tends to imitate your behaviors/habits.
3. BUY books and children's magazines for your child on birthdays and holidays. Try to get books on his/her reading level so he/she can read these books for fun and pleasure.
4. SEE that your child has good attendance habits. When your child is absent from school, he/she misses work and may not be able to keep up with the class.
5. CHECK your child's report card. If your child is having trouble with any subject, consult his/her teacher to find out why and how you can help.
6. SET aside a regular time for homework. Help your child develop homework routines.
7. MAKE games. Play games with math flash cards or with word cards containing troublesome words. When a game is made out of drill, children respond positively.

**FERPA INFORMATION**

The entire FERPA Information can be found on the Amherst County Public Schools; website at [www.amherst.k12.va.us](http://www.amherst.k12.va.us) under the parents/students tab. You can request a paper copy of the manual from your child's school.

**NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Amherst County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices, as required by Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, and Section 504. The Chief Human Resources Officer, is designated as the Compliance Officer responsible for assurances of non-discrimination. He may be reached at the following address: P O Box 1257, Amherst, Virginia 24521, and telephone number (434) 946-9376. The Division Discipline Supervisor is responsible for the fair and equitable implementation of the Division's discipline policies. He can be reached at the following address: P O Box 1257, 153 Washington Street, Amherst, Virginia 24521, telephone number 434-946-9343.

**NOTICE TO STUDENTS, PARENTS AND  
STAFF REGARDING THE USE OF CAMERA  
SURVEILLANCE ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

For the safety of our students, staff and visitors, the School District employs camera surveillance equipment for security purposes. This equipment may or may not be monitored at any time. Surveillance cameras will generally be utilized only in public areas where there is no “reasonable expectation of privacy.” Public areas may include school buses; building entrances; hallways; parking lots; front offices where students, employees, and parents

come and go; gymnasiums during public activities; cafeterias; and supply rooms. However, it is not possible for surveillance cameras to cover all public areas of District buildings or all District activities. District surveillance cameras will not be installed in “private” areas such as restrooms, locker rooms, changing areas, private offices, or classrooms. Recordings are not public information.