

Whitfield County Schools  
**Elementary Handbook**  
Student Handbook



**Varnell Elementary  
School  
2022-2023**

# Whitfield County Schools Elementary Student Handbook

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# WCS Academic Calendar 2022-2023

*Approved February 8, 2022*

Tuesday - Thursday, August 2-4 .....	Pre-Planning for Teachers
Friday, August 5 .....	First Day of School for Students
Monday, September 5 .....	Labor Day Holiday for Students and Staff
Friday, October 7 .....	Student Holiday and Staff Professional Learning Day
Monday, October 10 .....	Student and Staff Holiday
Wednesday, October 19 .....	Early Dismissal (Parent Conference/Professional Learning)
Monday–Friday, November 21–25 .....	Thanksgiving Holidays
Friday, December 16 .....	Early Dismissal for Students (P.M. workday for staff)
Monday, Dec. 19 - Monday, Jan. 2.....	Christmas Holidays for Students and Staff
Tuesday-Wednesday, January 3-4.....	Student Holiday and Staff Professional Learning Days
Thursday, January 5 .....	Students Resume Classes after Christmas Holidays
Monday, January 16 .....	Staff and Student Holiday (Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday)
Monday-Tuesday, February 20-21 .....	Staff and Student Holiday (President's Day)
Wednesday, February 22 .....	Student Holiday and Staff Professional Learning Day
Friday, March 17.....	Student Holiday/Staff Prof. Dev. <b>OR</b> Inclement Weather Make-up
Wednesday, March 22.....	Early Dismissal (Parent Conference/Professional Learning)
Monday–Friday, April 3-7.....	Spring Holidays
Friday, May 26 .....	Early Dismissal (Last Day of School for Students -180 days)
Monday, May 29.....	Memorial Day Holiday
Tuesday-Wednesday, May 30-31 .....	Post-Planning for Teachers
Thursday, June 1 .....	Makeup day for Teachers if Inclement Weather Day is used.

Elementary Schools – Four 9-Week Grading Periods			Middle Schools – Six 6-Week Grading Periods			
	<i>Progress Reports Issued</i>	<i>Nine-Week Grading Period Ends</i>	<i>Report Card Dates</i>		<i>Six-Week Grading Period Ends</i>	<i>Report Card/Progress Report Dates</i>
1 <sup>st</sup>	Monday, Sept. 12	Thursday, October 6	Friday, October 14	1 <sup>st</sup>	Friday, September 16	Friday, Sept. 23
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Friday, November 11	Friday, December 16	Friday, January 6	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Friday, October 28	Friday, Nov. 4
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Friday, February 10	Friday, March 10	Thursday, March 16	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Friday, December 16	Friday, Jan. 6
4 <sup>th</sup>	Friday, April 21	Friday, May 26	End of Year	4 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday, Feb 15	Friday, Feb. 24
				5 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday, April 12	Wed. April 19
				6 <sup>th</sup>	Friday, May 26	End of Year
High Schools						
	<i>Semester Ends</i>		<i>Progress Reports Issued</i>		<i>Semester Report Cards</i>	
1 <sup>st</sup>	Friday, December 16		Friday, September 16 Friday, October 28		Friday, Jan. 6	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Friday, May 26		Wednesday, February 15 Wednesday, April 12		End of Year	

# WCS Elementary Assessment Calendar 2022-2023

<p>Aug. 5 <b>GKIDS 2.0 Testing Window Opens (year long assessment)</b></p> <p>Aug. 8-Sept. 12 <b>GKIDS Readiness Check Window Opens</b></p> <p>Aug. 22-Sept. 09 <b>MAP Grades K-8</b></p>	<p><b>AUGUST 2022</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>Th</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td>31</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				<p><b>SEPTEMBER 2022</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>Th</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		<p>Sept.12-23 <b>CogAT – 4<sup>th</sup> grade</b></p> <p>Sept. 12 <b>GKIDS Readiness Check Window Closes</b></p>							
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## **WCS Vision, Mission, and Beliefs**

### **Vision**

We envision a valued and dynamic school district that prepares students for success in a global community.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to maximize student learning by providing challenging and engaging educational experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

### **Beliefs**

- We believe the needs of students, personnel, families, and the community are best met with a unified direction.
- We believe our purpose is to lead students to success by engaging them in challenging and meaningful work.
- We believe teachers are leaders who design learning experiences for students.
- We believe our personnel, families, and community members are vital to the education of our students.
- We believe in creating and maintaining a safe, inviting, and inclusive learning environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

## **After School Child Care Program**

Most Whitfield County Elementary Schools offer After School Child Care for students in grades Pre-K through five. Please contact individual elementary school campuses for specific details. Cost of the program is \$8 per day and the program ends at 6:00 p.m. After School Child Care services must be pre-paid the week before care is needed. For more information on After School Child Care, contact the individual elementary school.

### **Attendance Expectations**

Students are expected to be in school each day unless excused for one of the reasons listed below.

- Personal illness that would endanger the student's health or the health of others.
- Serious illness or death in the student's immediate family.
- Special and recognized religious holidays observed by the student's faith.
- Mandated absence by order of governmental agencies, e.g., court order or pre-induction physical for the armed forces.
- Conditions rendering school attendance impossible or hazardous to health or safety.
- A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
- Approved college visitation in accordance with high school regulations.
- Working at an electoral poll site during an election.
- Student trips deemed educational by the Assistant Superintendent.

Parent notes may be accepted for up to 10 absences in a school year and must be turned in five (5) days after the absence. After 10 total absences, parents will be required to provide written medical excuses or documentation. However, in cases when a student's absences become excessive and are addressed through an attendance intervention (i.e. Attendance Review Team, Truancy Treatment Team or School Social Work Referral) absences will only be excused by written medical documentation.

Students shall be counted present when they are serving as the pages of the Georgia General Assembly and/or while representing the school in an activity approved by the school and/or Board of Education. Students in foster care shall be counted present when they attend court proceedings relating to their foster care.

A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the U. S. armed forces or National Guard, and such parent has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting will be granted up to five (5) days of excused absences per school year to visit with his or her parent prior to the parent's deployment or during the parent's leave.

Individual students who have emergencies to arise that necessitate their absence from school for a portion of the school day must have been present for one half of the instructional day in order to be included in attendance counts.

An unlawful (unexcused) absence is one not permitted under the Compulsory School Attendance Law (20-2-690) and policies of the Whitfield County School Board.

Any combination of five (5) unexcused tardies / late check-ins or unexcused early check-outs will be considered one (1) unexcused absence. If a student has excessive absences or tardies, the school social worker may refer the student and parent(s) to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Truancy Treatment Team (TTT) or the appropriate court when sufficient legal causes for these absences or tardies do not exist. Corrective

measures may be taken against the student and/or parent(s).

According to the State Board of Education rules, a student is truant who during the school calendar year has more than five (5) unexcused absences.

- The school will contact you in writing by mail when your child has 5, 10 and 15 total absences each school year.
- Parents may be requested to attend an Attendance Review Team (ART) meeting when students reach 5 unexcused or 10 total absences. Parents who do not attend the ART meeting will be referred to the school social worker. Parents may also be asked by the ART committee to provide written medical documentation to excuse future absences due to illness.
- Upon review of the student's attendance, the school social worker may refer the student and family to the community Truancy Treatment Team (TTT), the Department of Family and Children Services or the Whitfield County Juvenile or Magistrate Court.
- The ART and TTT process is ongoing and may not start over each year. If the intervention was held the previous school year, the family may not attend an ART or TTT the following year. However, the family will be notified by the school social worker of the continued attendance concerns.

### **Perfect Attendance Recognition**

A student may be recognized for perfect attendance, if the student has zero absences, no more than a combination of 5 unexcused tardies and/or unexcused early checkouts.

### **Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law**

#### **CODE SECTION --20-2-690-1.**

- (a) Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program.

Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall violate this Code Section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not to exceed \$100.00 or imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, or both, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction. Each day's absence from school in violation of this part shall constitute a separate offense.

## **Bus Procedures**

Whitfield County Schools provides School Bus Transportation for approximately 9,000 students on a daily basis. In order to maintain a safe and efficient transportation program and to offer this privilege with fairness and equality, all students are required to attend their zoned school in order to receive school bus service. Any parents who have been granted permission for their students to attend the school of their choice and whose residence address is not located within that school zone are responsible for transporting their students to and from school.

An exemption exists for students who qualify for special-needs bus services to specific programs in another school as authorized by the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).



Once a student has been enrolled in the school where their residence is zoned, the student and their family will be given bus route information for the bus to take them to and from their home of record. Due to safety and resource limitations, riding the bus to and from other locations cannot be accommodated.

On a limited (one-time) basis, students may ride to an alternate location as long as they have a signed note from a parent, verified by the school administrator, and presented to the bus driver prior to boarding. This exception is also contingent upon space being available on the bus.

Bus routes are established between schools, private residences, and designated neighborhood bus stops. Due to safety concerns, school buses do not deliver students to business locations. As always, based on the individual needs of the students, it is the parents responsibility to provide the necessary supervision for their students before the bus arrives at the bus stop in the morning and after the bus drops off the students in the afternoon

All students are expected to abide by the Bus Safety Rules provided in the student handbook.

If a hardship exists that makes it necessary for a parent to request a student to be delivered to an alternate location on a recurring basis, an exemption may be granted under the following conditions:

- Legitimate hardship cases may be appealed to the principal of the school for consideration by submitting a hardship request form provided by the school.
- Principals will evaluate each hardship request to determine if the situation precludes parents from being reasonably able to provide childcare, adult supervision, transportation, etc. If approved, the consideration is sent to the transportation department for the final approval.
- The alternate pickup or drop-off location must be at a residence within the student's home school zone.

If the hardship request is approved, the student will be delivered to the alternate address on a regular basis. Students would not be able to intermittently switch between their home and alternate addresses for bus pickup or delivery.

Parents: Please make sure that your child has proper supervision at the bus stop in the mornings and in the afternoons. Our drivers try to transport your child safely between the school and the bus stop, but it is the parent's responsibility to see to the child's welfare before he or she is picked up by the bus in the morning and when he is delivered to the bus stop in the afternoon.

## **Car Riders**

In order to pick up a child in the car rider line, you must have the child's car rider tag issued by the school. If you do not have the tag, please report to the front office with identification to pick up your child. You must also be listed on the student's contact form. If the person is not listed on the contact sheet, he/she will not be allowed to pick up the child.

## **Complaint Procedures**

Parents are expected to address complaints or grievances beginning at the school level with the teacher first and then the administration. Central office personnel should be contacted next should parents feel the issues have not been resolved. If still unsatisfied, the superintendent should be contacted. Parents have the right to speak to the Board of Education through public participation at a Board of Education meeting. Complaint Procedures under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

### ***Grounds for a Complaint***

A formal complaint may be filed when an organization or individual believes that a recipient of funding has violated a requirement of a federal statute or regulation related to the administration of a program. The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one (1) year prior to the date that the complaint is received, unless a longer period is reasonable because the violation is considered systemic or ongoing. The federal ESSA programs for which formal complaints may be filed and investigated are:

- Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
- Title I, Part A – School Improvement Grants, referred to as 1003(a) and 1003(g)
- Title I, Part C: Education of Migrant Children
- Title I, Part D: Programs for Neglected or Delinquent Children
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- Title III, Part A: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students
- Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1: Student Support and Academic Enrichment

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.** A parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth may also file a complaint under Title IX, Part A – the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the process for filing a complaint is the same as it is for the ESSA federal programs. Unique to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, however, is the GaDOE’s role in also resolving disputes regarding a final decision over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in a school made at the school district level. Each school district must have a McKinney-Vento dispute resolution process to address issues regarding eligibility, school selection or enrollment in a school. If the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the school district’s decision and the school district’s appeal process has been exhausted, a request may be filed within 10 business days for the GaDOE to review the final decision of the school district.

**Equitable services.** Formal complaint procedures regarding a school district’s or a 21st CCLC program’s equitable services for children attending private school are found on the [State Ombudsman](#) webpage.

### ***Filing a Complaint***

A formal complaint must be filed in writing to the Whitfield County School District superintendent or his/her designee.

The complaint must include the following:

1. A statement that the LEA has violated a requirement of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program;
2. The date on which the violation occurred;
3. The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated (include citation to the Federal statute or regulation);
4. A list of names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide additional information;
5. Copies of all applicable documents supporting the complaint’s position; and
6. The address of the complainant/s.

### ***Investigation of Complaint***

Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, the Superintendent or his/her designee will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

1. The date the Department received the complaint;
2. How the complainant may provide additional information;
3. A statement of the ways in which the Department may investigate or address the complaint; and
4. Any other pertinent information.

If additional information or an investigation is necessary, the Superintendent will have sixty (60) days from receipt of the information or completion of the investigation to issue a Letter of Findings. If the Letter of Findings indicates that a violation has been found, corrective action will be required and timelines for completion will be included. Either the 30-day or 60-day timelines outlined above may be extended, if exceptional circumstances exist. The Letter of Findings will be sent directly to the complainant.

### ***Right of Appeal***

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the local level, the complainant has the right to request review of the decision by the Georgia Department of Education. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the Superintendent's decision and include a complete statement of the reasons supporting the appeal.

The complaint must be addressed to:

Georgia Department of Education  
Office of Legal Services  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE  
2052 Twin Tower East  
Atlanta, GA 30334

## **Curriculum Information**

### ***GA Standards of Excellence***

The GA Standards of Excellence (GSE) clearly define what is expected of Whitfield County students at each grade level. The clear goals set by these educational standards help teachers ensure students have the skills and knowledge to be successful beyond the classroom. Standards do not tell teachers how to teach but do guide their lesson designs to include the knowledge and skills students need to succeed. Standards help teachers customize work to provide the best teaching and learning experiences for their students. Standards also help students and parents see clear and realistic goals for success.

The GA Standards of Excellence are designed to be rigorous and relevant to the real world and to reflect the knowledge and skills our young people need for success in college and their careers. Whitfield County teachers have been trained on the standards and understand what this rigor will look like in their classrooms. The standards emphasize development of critical thinking and problem solving skills in students to help them reflect more deeply and encourage profound learning in all subject areas. In the classroom, work aligned to the GA Standards of Excellence will push students to collaborate, which trains them to be excellent communicators who speak and write effectively.

The GA Standards of Excellence also include an integrated model of literacy, increasing text complexity and the use of technology to enhance learning in all content areas. Math students delve deeper into the process skills

by engaging in authentic tasks. GA Standards of Excellence raise the bar for students in all grade levels, requiring teachers, students, and parents to work together to embrace the challenges of this curriculum.

## **Discipline**

The discipline code will be explained to each student and a copy sent home for parents' records at the beginning of each new school year. Each student will sign a form indicating an understanding of the code. The discipline code will be strictly followed. A copy of the Whitfield County School Discipline Code may be found at: [Whitfield County Discipline Policy](#). Discipline Brochure can be found here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

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

NOTICE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND ELIGIBLE STUDENTS OF RIGHTS UNDER FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA) AND PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

FERPA affords parents and eligible students (over 18 years of age or attending a postsecondary institution) certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review, within 45 days of a request, the education records of a student who is your child, or in the case of a student who is eighteen (18) or older, your own education records. Parents or eligible students should submit to the Superintendent a written request identifying the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Superintendent or designee will make arrangements for access and provide notice of such arrangements.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records to ensure that they are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights. To request the school district to amend a record, parents or eligible students should write to the school principal, specify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights. If the district decides not to amend the record, it will notify the parents or eligible students of the decision and inform them of their right to a hearing. Additional information regarding the hearing procedure will be provided with the notification of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA and its implementing regulations authorize disclosure without consent. One exception that permits disclosure without consent is to school officials with legitimate educational interest. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. A school official is a person employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including school nurses and school resource officers); a member of the school board; a person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a specific task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); a contractor consultant, volunteer, or other party to whom the school district has outsourced services; or a parent or student serving on an official committee (such as a disciplinary or grievance committee) or assisting another school official in performing his/her tasks. Upon request, the district discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.
4. FERPA requires the school district, with certain exceptions, to obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the student's education records. However, the district may disclose appropriate designated "directory information" without written consent, unless the parent or

eligible student has advised the district to the contrary in accordance with district procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the school to include this type of information from the student's education records in certain school publications, such as the annual yearbook, graduation or sports activity programs, and honor roll or other recognition lists.

The School District has designated the following information as directory information:

Note: The board may, but does not have to, include all the information listed below. Information listed must be consistent with those items designated in board policy:

- a) Student's name, address and telephone number;
- b) Student's date and place of birth;
- c) Student's participation in official school activities and sports;
- d) Weight and height of members of an athletic team;
- e) Dates of attendance at schools within the district;
- f) Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in district schools;
- g) Photograph; and
- h) Grade level.

Unless you, as a parent/guardian or eligible student, request otherwise, this information may be disclosed to the public upon request. In addition, two federal laws require school systems receiving federal financial assistance to provide military recruiters, upon request, with students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers unless parents have advised the school system that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. You have the right to refuse to allow all or any part of the above information to be designated as directory information and to refuse to allow it to be disclosed to the public upon request without your prior written consent. If you wish to exercise this right, you must notify the principal of the school at which the student is enrolled in writing within 30 days after officially enrolling in school or within 30 days of the date of the release of this notice.

5. You are also notified that from time to time students may be photographed, videotaped, or interviewed by the news media at school or some school activity or event; unless you, as a parent/guardian object in writing to the principal to your student being photographed, videotaped or interviewed. You must notify the principal of your objection by the date specified above. The principal will take reasonable steps to control the media's access to students. However, your submission of a written objection does not constitute a guarantee that your student will not be photographed, videoed, or interviewed, or that such information will not be posted on websites or social media sites not affiliated with the school or district, or in circumstances which are not within the knowledge or control of the principal.
6. You have the right to file with the United States Department of Education a complaint concerning alleged failures by the school district to comply with the requirements of FERPA or the regulations promulgated thereunder. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education,  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202.

### **Parent/Eligible Student Data Privacy Complaint Policy**

The Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act is a Georgia state law that is designed to ensure student data is kept private and secure from unauthorized access. Any parent or eligible student ("Complainant") may file a complaint with the local school system if that individual believes and alleges that a possible violation of rights under the federal or state privacy and security laws has occurred. A parent is defined as a natural parent, guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. An

eligible student is defined as a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

O.C.G.A. §20-2-667 Parental and student review of education record; model policies subsection (g)(1) directs the Georgia Department of Education to develop model policies and procedures for a parent or eligible student to file a complaint with an LEA regarding a possible violation of rights under federal or state student data privacy and security laws.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that parents or eligible students are provided a formal process to file a complaint with a local school system regarding a possible violation and to set forth the official process that the local school system must use to handle the complaint. The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one (1) year prior to the date that the complaint is received.

In accordance with OCGA §20-2-667 section (g)(1), Whitfield County School System policy is as follows:

1. Any Parent/Eligible Student with a complaint should request, in writing, a Parent/Eligible Student Complaint form from the following official:

Chris Parker  
 Director of Student Services  
 201 East Tyler Street, Dalton, GA 30721

2. The Complainant will be provided a complaint form within 3 business days of receiving the request.
3. A written response must be provided to the Complaint within 10 business days of receipt of complaint.
4. The Complainant may file an appeal with the local school superintendent within 10 business days of receiving a written response from the local school system.
5. Parents or eligible students may file an appeal for a final decision to the local board of education within 10 business days of receipt of a written response from the local school system.
6. Local boards of education must render a decision within 10 business days of receiving an appeal.

## **Field Trips**

All students should have the opportunity of attending field trips during the school year. Field trips are an extension of the educational experience the students receive at school. Therefore, all field trips should be directly related to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Donations may be requested from parents to help defray costs; however, no fees may be required and no student may be denied the opportunity to participate due to not paying.

Teachers are responsible for the organization of the field trip. Steps include informing the principal of the logistics of the trip, completing the bus request and student permission forms, making arrangements with the facility to be visited, and obtaining permission from parents for their children to participate. Field trips should generally be planned two weeks in advance to allow scheduling of buses and proper notification to the cafeteria if lunches are going to be needed. Overnight field trips require superintendent approval.

Only Whitfield County employees are allowed to ride on the buses with students. Parents who ride the bus are considered school volunteers and may attend as chaperones as long as they have been approved by the principal prior to the trip. If parents are supervising students, they must have completed the mandated reporter training. Parents attending the field trip do not need a background check as long as they are NOT chaperoning or in charge of students on the trip. Background checks will be required for parents supervising students on overnight

trips. For safety reasons, one list of the students and adults on each bus should be left in the office, and a copy taken on the bus. Also, a cell phone and a first aid kit should be on each bus.

School volunteers are also considered mandatory reporters and they must adhere to the same reporting guidelines mentioned above. In order to volunteer in WCS, school volunteers must complete the mandated reporter training and must provide the school with a copy of the online training ([Mandated Reporting Training Website](#)) or school conducted training certificate plus sign the WCS forms ([Mandated Reporter & Volunteer - No Compensation Forms](#)). These forms must be on file with each school he/she volunteers. Additional volunteer requirements must be completed if the volunteer is supervising overnight field trips and/or students outside of teacher's supervision.

### Whitfield County Schools Field Trip and Chaperone Guidelines for Non-Employees

Whitfield County Schools' students will attend a variety of field trips this year. In order to ensure the safety of our students and make the trip fun and educational, school personnel and chaperones must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. If you would like to attend a field trip with your child, you will need to submit this completed form at least 5 days prior to the trip. This is a Whitfield County Schools policy.
2. The teacher is ultimately responsible for all students, which is why it is a requirement that teachers cannot bring their own children on field trips unless their children are students in the attending class.
3. Field trips are off-campus learning experiences and tied to the curriculum. Parents are welcome to attend field trips in the capacity as a chaperone. Chaperones are used to assist the teacher and help ensure safety of the students in order to maximize the learning experience. A chaperone's attention needs to be completely focused on his/her assigned group of students. Therefore, only students enrolled at the designated school in the grade level attending the field trip are permitted to attend school field trips. Siblings of the student are not permitted to attend.
4. As a chaperone, you may be assigned a group of students to supervise. You must be aware of the whereabouts of your assigned group at all times.
5. Chaperones must provide their own transportation unless requested by the school to ride the bus.
6. Chaperones are asked to pay the entrance fee at the location of the trip, unless otherwise informed.
7. If souvenirs are purchased or snacks are brought, you must purchase enough for the entire group.
8. Whitfield County policies, such as proper attire and a tobacco free (smokeless and non-smokeless) environment, apply to field trips.
9. The Chaperone will need to complete the Mandated Reporter training and submit the certificate to the school before the trip. This is required by Georgia Law.
10. If it is an overnight trip involving boys and girls, you must have male and female chaperones. You should have 1 gender-specific chaperone for each 12 gender-specific students.
11. No field trips will be scheduled during the testing windows for state assessments.

## **GOSA Annual School Report Cards**

Each year, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement provides school reports for all public elementary, middle, and high schools in Georgia. These reports include A-F letter grades based on school performance and other useful information about the school, such as performance on statewide assessments, the make-up of the school's student body, the graduation rate, and additional academic information. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) creates these reports to provide parents with clear and concise information on school performance for all stakeholders.

The current, most-up-date, report card is located on the school website.

## Grades and Report Cards

Infinite Campus is used for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to record grades, and report cards are sent home at the end of each nine week grading period in order to communicate the academic achievement, conduct, and attendance of students with their parents. Progress reports are sent home at 4 1/2 weeks.

All kindergarten through second grade students receive a standards-based report card which identifies how the student is progressing with the GA Standards of Excellence on a scaled rubric. The beginning of the school year is an adjustment period mentally, emotionally, and academically for our younger learners. For this reason, a progress report will not be sent home with kindergarten and first grade students for the first 4 1/2 week grading period. Grades 3-5 use the numerical format below to report progress.

The letter-numerical grading system is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Conduct</u>	
A 90-100	Satisfactory	S
B 80-89	Needs to Improve	N
C 70-79	Unsatisfactory	U
Below 70 -U		

## Harassment

It is the policy of this School District to prohibit any act of harassment of students by other students or employees based upon race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or genetic make-up that is unwelcome, unwanted, and/or uninvited at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act by a student or employee shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment or suspension or expulsion of the student.

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment. There may be other speech or conduct which students or employees experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any student, employee, parent or other individual who believes that a student has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the School District as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy JAA, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to their school counselor or any administrator. Students and employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination. If at any point in the investigation of reported sexual harassment of a student, the coordinator or designee determines that the reported harassment should more properly be termed abuse, the reported incident or situation shall be referred pursuant to the established protocol for child abuse investigation.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expression of prohibited harassment. The principals of



all schools shall ensure that students and parents are informed through student handbooks and verbally that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported, and the consequences for violating this policy.

Whitfield County Schools policies: [Whitfield County Board of Education Harassment Policies](#)

## **Health & Immunizations**

All students must have a current certificate of immunization on file in the main office.

## **Internet Policy**

All students have access to the internet. View the [Internet acceptable use and internet safety guidelines](#) online. Parents may also request a written copy of these guidelines by contacting the school. The school district cannot provide an absolute assurance that students will be prevented from accessing inappropriate materials or sending and receiving objectionable communications but the district will ensure that all practical precautions will be taken to keep students safe from illegal and/or inappropriate material. Students are instructed in acceptable use and internet safety and their internet use is monitored as closely as possible. If a parent does not wish their child to be allowed on the internet, they must notify the school principal in writing within the first week of each school term.

## **Medications**

All medications other than the exceptions listed in this policy, whether prescription or over-the-counter, may be administered only in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the principal of each school. All medications must be taken by the student, parent or guardian to the school office immediately upon arrival at school and must be in original pharmaceutical containers, clearly labeled as to the name of the student, the name of the medication, the appropriate dosage, and the times for dosage. Any student possessing prescription or over-the-counter medication not in accordance with these guidelines will be considered in violation of the School District's drug policy and shall be subject to the discipline set forth in the student code of conduct and/or the student/parent handbook.

A student for whom the school has on file supporting medical documentation may carry at all times with parental/guardian permission inhalers for asthma, auto-injectable epinephrine (epi-pens) for allergic reactions and medical needs for diabetes. Students authorized to self-administer such medications shall be instructed not to permit any other student to handle, possess, or otherwise attempt to use his/her medication and shall be informed that violations of such instructions will be dealt with in accordance with the student code of conduct. Use of the prescribed medication by an unauthorized student could result in charges of distribution of drugs under Whitfield County Discipline Code 3d Sale of or distribution of drugs or alcohol on school property or at a school function.

In order for the student to carry and self-administer such medications, or in order for the school to store and administer the medication for students who are unable to self-administer because of age or any other reason, parents must provide a written statement from a licensed physician confirming that the student is able to self-administer the medication and written permission from the parent for the nurse or designated employee to consult with the doctor regarding any questions that may arise concerning the medication. Such permission shall release the school district and its employees and agents from civil liability if the self-administering student

suffers an adverse reaction as a result of self-administration of such medication. Parents are encouraged to provide the school with duplicate medication and supplies in the event a student is unable to self-administer or fails to bring the medication or equipment to school.

Nurses or other school employees are authorized to administer an auto-injectable epinephrine, if available, to a student who is having an actual or perceived anaphylactic adverse (allergic) reaction, regardless of whether the student has a prescription for epinephrine. Any school employee who in good faith administers or chooses not to administer an auto-injectable epinephrine to a student in such circumstances shall be immune from civil liability.

## **Neglected Funds**

School Bookkeepers will make at least three attempts to contact the parent/guardian regarding neglected funds. If contact is unsuccessful, or refund is not claimed at school year-end, then the neglected funds will be considered a donation to the account of which they were originally intended.

## **Nondiscrimination**

It is the policy of the Whitfield County School District that racial, sexual, or other forms of harassment are strictly forbidden. Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent or other individual who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the school district based upon his or her race, color, religion, national origin, disability or sex should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or the appropriate coordinator, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints or harassment procedures. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to their school counselor. Students and employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination. A copy of the discriminatory complaint procedure of Whitfield County Schools (GAAA/JAA) is located online in the board of education policy manual at [Complaints and Grievances Policy](#) and is available in all school offices and the central office. State law prohibits discrimination based on gender in athletic programs of local school systems (Equity in Sports Act, O.C.G.A. 20-2-315). Students are hereby notified that Whitfield County Schools does not discriminate based on gender in its athletic programs. Inquiries or complaints concerning sports equity in this school system may be submitted to the sports equity coordinator.

## **Parent & Family Engagement**

Districts are required to set aside 1% of the allotted budget for activities for building the capacity of parents to help their children succeed academically. The district has one full-time Family Engagement Coordinator and one part-time Family Engagement Specialist to coordinate activities at the district level. Parents are asked for input at the district level on our Parent & Family Engagement Policy, Strategic Plan, District Improvement Plan, and 1% Family Engagement Set-Aside funds. All funds are distributed to schools on an equitable per pupil allocation based on the previous October FTE number of students on free and reduced meals.

At the school level, parents are asked for input which guides the School Improvement Plan/budget, Parent & Family Engagement Policy, School-Parent Compact, and 1% Family Engagement Set-Aside funds.

## **Parent’s Right to Know Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals**

July 1, 2022

In compliance with the requirements of the Every Students Succeeds Act, the Varnell Elementary School would like to inform you that you may request information about the professional qualifications of your student’s teacher(s) and/ or paraprofessional(s). The following information may be requested:

- Whether the student’s teacher—
  - has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
  - is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
  - is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.
  
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you wish to request information concerning your child’s teacher’s and/ or paraprofessional’s qualifications, please contact Paula Wheeler at 706-694-3471.

## **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)**

PPRA affords parents and eligible students (18 or older or emancipated minors) certain rights regarding the conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams.

These include the right to:

- Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas (“protected information survey”) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED)
  1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
  2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
  3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
  4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
  5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
  6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
  7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
  8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of –
  1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
  2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and

3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.
- Inspect, upon request and before administration or use –
  1. Protected information surveys of students;
  2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
  3. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

Parents and eligible students will be notified at the beginning of the school year if the school district has identified the specific or approximate dates during the school year when any of the activities listed above are expected to be scheduled. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. The Board of Education has developed and adopted policies, in conjunction with parents, regarding these rights as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. The district will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. The district will also directly notify parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation in the specific activity or survey.

The school is required by federal law to give this notice to parents. However, the school does not have scheduled any such activities as are described above. If any such activities are initiated during the school year, parents will be notified accordingly and will be afforded all rights described herein.

## Publicity

### Release Of Directory Information

The Board of Education designates the following information as "directory information." Unless a parent or eligible student makes a timely request to the principal of the school where the student is enrolled that such information not be designated directory information on the individual student, such information will not be considered confidential and may be disclosed upon request:

1. Student's name, address and telephone number
2. Student's date and place of birth
3. Student's email address
4. Student's participation in official school clubs and sports
5. Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team
6. Dates of attendance at schools within the school district
7. Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools
8. Photograph
9. Grade level

Parents are further notified that students may be photographed, videotaped, or interviewed by the news media or school system personnel at school or some school activity or event. **Parents wishing that the above information be denied release must notify the school principal in writing within 30 days of the first day of a school year or the date of enrollment.**

## School Closings

In the event of severe inclement weather, mechanical breakdown, or other uncontrollable circumstance, Whitfield County Schools may be closed, may delay starting time, or may advance dismissal time. Decisions regarding school closings will be made by Central Office personnel and will be announced over local radio stations as well as Chattanooga television stations. Whitfield County Schools webpage and other avenues of social media will contain closure information. Blackboard Connect, a student/parent calling system will also be employed to inform parents of school closings. If no announcement is made by approximately 6:30 a.m., it should be assumed that school will be in session. Please do not call the school or Central Office, as lines need to be left open for emergencies.

## School Improvement Plans

After completing a comprehensive needs assessment & reviewing data sources, all schools, along with stakeholder input, must create a school improvement plan. This plan serves as a guiding document for school improvement and is reviewed/updated annually. This plan serves to guide how school resources are allocated. In the spring, plans will be submitted for review by the Director of Title I, Deputy Superintendent, and Superintendent for approval. These plans serve as a guiding document for professional learning, instruction and use of funds to improve the achievement of all students.

## School Nutrition

### Free and Reduced Meal Applications

Free and Reduced Meal Applications are available on-line. Go to the Whitfield County School website at [www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition](http://www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition) to access the online application. Paper copies will be available at the beginning of school. You are encouraged to complete an application if you think your children may qualify. **ONLY ONE APPLICATION PER HOUSEHOLD** needs to be completed, listing all school age children on the form.

### Meal Prices

Meal Prices	Students	Adults
Breakfast Elementary	Free	2.00
Breakfast Middle & High	\$1.50	2.00

Lunch Elementary	\$2.50	3.50
Lunch Middle & High	\$2.75	3.50

### **Online Payment Option**

Parents are able to pay for student meals with cash, money order, check or online.

Advantages of Using Online Payment System-

- See your student's meal balance at anytime from anywhere
- Deposit payments for multiple students in just one click
- Set up recurring payments for monthly or weekly deposits
- Reviewing individual student meal histories
- Automated notifications via email or text when your student's balance falls below an amount you choose

Go to the Whitfield County School website at [www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition](http://www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition) to set up your child's account. You will need your child's Student ID number to set up an account. If you do not know your child's Student ID number you may contact your child's cafeteria manager.

### **Biometric finger scan**

Schools will be using a biometric finger scan to identify students. Parents can opt out of the finger scan by contacting their school's cafeteria manager.

### **Charges**

Students have a limited charge privilege. If an elementary or middle school student arrives at school without money, they are allowed up to (5) five days of charges. If a high school student arrives at school without money, they are allowed up to (3) three days of charges. If the student has reached the charge limit, he/she will be provided an alternate meal (such as a cheese sandwich and milk). Every effort will be made to notify parents of charges and the alternative meal policy at the first negative balance, utilizing automated calls, letters and email. Charges are not allowed for extras or a la carte items.

### **Menus**

Monthly lunch menus can be viewed on [www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition](http://www.wcsga.net/schoolnutrition).

### **Outside Food**

Students are encouraged to eat school prepared meals. Food items brought from home to be consumed in the school cafeteria should be in appropriate containers such as paper bags or lunch boxes. Containers with advertising (such as Wendy's, McDonald's, etc.) should not be brought into the school cafeteria. Carbonated beverages should not be brought to school

## **Smoking/Use of Tobacco Products**

Smoking and the use of tobacco products including vapor pens in the school building or anywhere on school grounds is a violation of Whitfield County School Board of Education policy. This rule applies to field trips and all extracurricular activities which are an extension of the school. All persons on school property must follow this rule.

## **Title I Purpose and Definition**

### **Purpose**

Title I, Part A is a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This Act provides federal funds through the Georgia Department of Education to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards.

LEAs target the Title I, Part A funds they receive to public schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Title I, Part A is designed to support state and local school reform efforts tied to challenging state academic standards in order to reinforce and enhance efforts to improve teaching and learning for students. Title I, Part A programs must be based on effective means of improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental involvement.

Under Title I, Part A local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to provide services for eligible private school students, as well as eligible public school students. These services must be developed in consultation with officials of the private schools. The Title I services provided by the LEA for private school participants are designed to meet their educational needs and supplement the educational services provided by the private school.

### **Whitfield County Title I Schools**

In Whitfield County, we have twenty Title I schools. Thirteen elementary schools, five middle schools, and two high schools operate as School-wide Title I programs. All Whitfield County Schools review data and gather stakeholder feedback, which leads to the revision of each School's Improvement Plan. These plans are reviewed annually for progress and revised as needed. Comprehensive Needs Assessments and School Improvement Plans guide the Title I budget planning process at each Title I school.

Varnell Elementary utilizes Title I funds in a variety of ways to support student growth and achievement. Utilizing Title I funding allows Varnell Elementary School to extend students services and teacher training with an Instructional Coach, professional learning resources, technology, and material to enhance classroom libraries.

## **Visitors**

For security reasons, all persons visiting the school must report to the office to sign in and receive a visitor's sticker. All visitors must have a visible, affixed visitor's sticker if they are outside of the office area. Before leaving the school, visitors should return to the office to sign out and return their visitor's sticker.

If a visitor appears unannounced, the teacher should instruct the person to go to the office to sign in before any other business can be conducted. Parents may visit classrooms after making an appointment with the teacher. Students from other schools may not visit during the instructional day unless they are participating in a specific program.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential and important part of school life. Recruited by teachers or the parent organization, volunteers can be of assistance to the school and are valuable to the school's public relations. To ensure school safety, volunteers sign in/out in the office and wear a nametag or visitor's sticker while working in the building. The principal or assistant principal should approve volunteers prior to working with students. Volunteers are mandated reporters. There are procedures for using volunteers in the school building and are listed below.

### Volunteer Procedure Approval:

- Person completes Volunteer application on Applitrack
- Principal finds the application on Applitrack and sends the recommendation to HR
- HR sends the fingerprinting instructions to the email address listed on the application to volunteer
- Person completes the Mandated Reporter module online training within Vector Solutions.
- Complete the Required forms for volunteers ([Volunteer Forms](#))

School volunteers are considered mandatory reporters and must adhere to Mandated Reporter guidelines. In order to volunteer in WCS, school volunteers must complete the mandated reporter online training at [SafeSchools](#). Volunteers may print the completion data so they may deliver a copy to the school(s) they wish to volunteer.

Additional volunteer requirements must be completed if a volunteer is supervising overnight field trips and/or students outside of teacher's supervision and would need to be discussed with the building administrator.

When HR receives the fingerprinting results, confirms the Mandated Reporter training and the paperwork is complete an email will be sent to the principal or building administrator that the volunteer has been approved.

## Waste, Fraud, Abuse, and Corruption

The School District (Whitfield County Schools) shall not tolerate fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption of any kind and has an established system for the reporting of suspicious activities.

### Definitions:

**Fraud:** A false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, that is used for the purpose of misappropriating property and/or monetary funds from federal, state, or local grants and funds.

**Waste:** Thoughtless or careless expenditure, consumption, mismanagement, use, or squandering of local, state, or federal resources to the detriment or potential detriment of the district. Waste also includes incurring unnecessary costs as a result of inefficient or ineffective practices, systems, or controls.

**Abuse:** Excessive or improper use of resources, or employing resources in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for their use. Abuse also includes intentional destruction, diversion, manipulation, misapplication, maltreatment, or misuse of resources; extravagant or excessive use as to abuse one's position or authority.

**Corruption:** A form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Corruption may include many activities, including bribery and embezzlement.



**Responsibilities:**

Employees and parties maintaining a business relationship with the district who suspect fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption, whether it pertains to federal, state, or local programs, should report their concerns to the Superintendent or his/her designee. If fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption is suspected by the Superintendent, such allegations should be reported to the Chairman of the Board of Education.

All reports of suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption shall be handled under the strictest confidentiality allowed under the law. Informants may remain anonymous as allowed by law but are encouraged to cooperate with investigators and to provide as much detail and evidence as possible of an alleged violation of this policy. Any and all reports of suspicious activity and/or suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption will be investigated. Results of an investigation shall not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than those individuals with a legitimate need to know until the results become subject to public disclosure in accordance with state and/or federal law.