

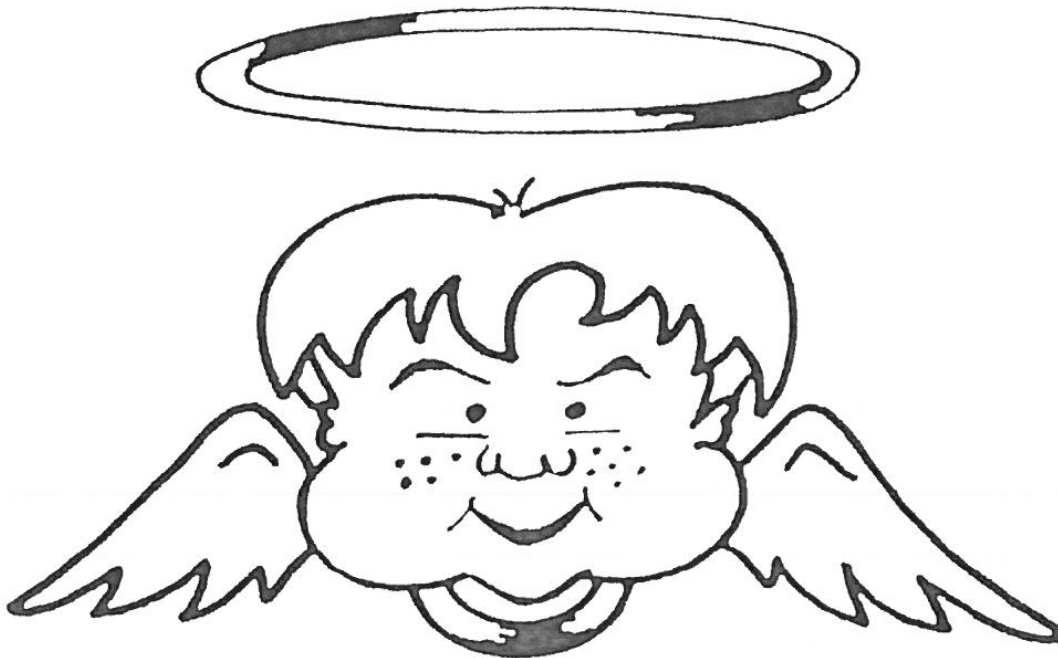
St. Ansgar Elementary School

206 East 8th St. Ansgar, IA 50472 (641)713-2331 (641)713-2370 (FAX)

www.stacsd.org

Preschool Handbook

Fostered by a cooperative effort between the St. Ansgar School District and community, our mission is to provide the highest quality education in a secure, positive, and challenging environment, empowering all students to reach their full potential.



Lifelong Learning Standards:

- Self Directed Learner
- Effective Communicator/Producer
- Collaborative Worker/Citizen
- Complex Thinker

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the St. Ansgar Community Schools Preschool!

Ahead lies a big step in your child's adventure of lifelong learning. Our goal is to create an environment with your child that is full of socially and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities. Through the many efforts of families and staff, the children will have respectful, positive, and enjoyable interactions in this beginning school experience.

The preschool handbook is to be used as a yearlong reference. Inside you will find information describing the preschool's mission and the school year in general. Please read it carefully and save it to answer your questions that arise. If you have a question that cannot be answered in this handbook, please feel free to contact the office or us at the number listed below.

Please help your child to become excited about school. Since you are such a big part of your child's education, we will also be keeping you informed with newsletters and notes. These will give you information about our classroom themes and activities.

We look forward to having you and your child become a part of the St. Ansgar Community Preschool.

Sincerely,

Kelli Hemann, Preschool Teacher
641-420-8211

Mrs. Pam Williams, Preschool Para
641-713-2331

Saint Ansgar Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, and creed in its educational programs, services or employment practices. Students, parents of students, applicants for employment and employees of Saint Ansgar Community School shall have the right to file a formal complaint alleging non-compliance with equity regulations. Inquiries concerning application of this statement should be addressed to: Lynn Baldus, Equity Coordinator, 206 East 8th Street., PO Box 398, St. Ansgar, Iowa 50472; Telephone (641) 713-4681, lbaldus@stacsd.org

Mission Statement

The St. Ansgar Community School District was awarded the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Grant in 2010. The St. Ansgar Community Preschool mission is that a partnership of school staff, parents, and community will prepare beginning students to become life-long learners. This will be accomplished by recognizing the value of each child, and providing academic and personal growth in a nurturing and challenging environment.

Philosophy and Goals

The St. Ansgar Community Preschool is founded on the philosophy that children, their families, and society benefit from quality early childhood programs. We believe that there is a critical link between a child's early experiences and later successes in life.

The St. Ansgar Preschool program's goal is to provide a safe, respectful environment that promotes physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of preschool aged children. To meet this goal, we are developing a research-based program that shows all children need the following:

- a healthy and safe environment
- frequent, positive, warm interactions among adults and children
- learning activities appropriate to children's age and development
- many varied age-appropriate materials
- nutritious snacks
- ongoing, systematic evaluation and assessments
- regular communication with parents
- specially trained teachers and paras

It will grow to provide an enriched setting that encourages children's natural curiosity, thus leading to new skill development. The preschool program is adopting and will be

meeting the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, administered by the Iowa Department of Education. The Early Learning Standards are used to guide expectations for the children and instructional practices.

Curriculum

The St. Ansgar Community Preschools have adopted strategies based on *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* to help ensure positive outcomes. This is an ongoing endeavor.

This curriculum relates directly to the subject area curricula used in elementary schools, so children's learning in preschool forms the basis of all learning that will follow. Students will thematically learn about the world around them as they practice core pre-academic skills such as self-help, social, letter, and numbers skills. We are also striving to meet all of the **Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS)**. The QPPS are based on research and evidence-based practices in child development and early education.

Assessment

It is the school district's belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults. The results will be used for planning experiences for the children and to guide instruction. Assessment will never be used to label children or to include or exclude them from a program. A family's culture and a child's experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important piece of the child's growth and development. All results will be kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and stored in a secure filing cabinet.

Children are assessed in the following ways:

- Creative Curriculum and Project Gold is used extensively.
 - Observational data provides an ongoing anecdotal record of each child's progress during daily activities.
 - IGDIs is being looked at and used like DIBELS is at the kindergarten level to monitor the growth of early literacy skills.
 - Child's portfolios are organized by the teaching staff and include the assessments, observational data, and child work samples collected on an ongoing basis.
 - Families are asked to contribute information about their child's progress.
- Young children often show different skills in different settings. Working together,

the teaching staff and families can gather a complete picture of a child's growth and development.

The information from the above is used in the following ways:

- To provide information about children's needs, interests, and abilities in order to plan developmentally appropriate experiences.
- To provide information to parents about their children's development milestones.
- To indicate possible areas that require additional assessment.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program Administrator: Mr. Josh Culberson, Principal

Teachers: Mrs. Kelli Hemann

Para-educators(Paras): Mrs. Pam Williams

School Nurse: Mrs. Michelle Caron

Support Staff

Central Rivers AEA support staff members provide resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom upon request to help all children be successful in the preschool setting. Such staff may include: early childhood consultant, speech and language pathologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist or others.

Daily Activities

A consistent daily schedule and lessons are planned to offer a balance of activities. Learning is both formal and informal. Play is planned for every day. Talking is balanced with listening, individual time with group time, indoors with outdoors, and quiet play with noisy play. Children will have the opportunity to participate in the following activities daily:

- Large and Small Group Activities
- Individual Activities
- Outdoor Activities
- Story Time

- Snacks
- Art
- Blocks and Wheel Toys
- Computers
- Drams
- Games and Toys
- Music
- Pretend
- Sand and Water
- Science
- Writing

The Preschool Sessions and Calendar

The St. Ansgar Community Preschool Centers are divided into two daily sessions.

Note: Students are *not to be dropped off early or picked up late*.

Morning Sessions: 8:15 – 11:15 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. No school on Wednesdays. Bus transportation is provided to preschool. Parents may drop off at the south doors. The buses use the main entrance, circle drive - cars are not allowed to use the circle drive at any time. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for arranging transportation home from preschool at 11:15 am.

Afternoon Session: 12:15 – 3:15 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. No school on Wednesdays. Parents/Guardians will arrange preschool transportation to preschool. Parents may drop off at the south door. The buses use the main entrance, circle drive - cars are not allowed to use the circle drive at any time. Bus transportation is provided for home/daycare. (Optional SOUTH door pick-up)

The district's calendar will be followed *with some exceptions* including the preschool starting and year ending dates. Parents will be notified in advance by a note/newsletter when an early dismissal is planned by the administration, if different from the calendar.

Class Size

The maximum class size is 20 children in each session. A teaching staff-child ratio of at least 1:10 will be maintained at all times. The office will be notified if there needs to be coverage of the classroom to maintain the staff-child ratio.

School Closings

All school closings, delayed starts and early dismissals due to inclement weather will be broadcast on the following radio and TV stations:

KIMT-TV (MASON CITY 3)
KAAL-TV (AUSTIN 6)
KTTC-TV (ROCHESTER 10)

KGLO (MASON CITY 1300 AM)
KLSS (MASON CITY 106.1 FM)

ONE CALL is also used to notify our families of any closings, delays and early dismissals due to inclement weather. All PS families will be entered into the ONE CALL system.

When an early dismissal occurs, parents must ensure that their children know how to get into the house if no one is home. Please have a plan ready and discuss it with your child before early dismissals occur. Please write and send this plan on a note for the teacher at the beginning of the school year. Make sure to update any changes. If there is a day that early dismissal is a possibility, it is helpful to send a note to preschool with the plan for that day. Calling home from school should not be the plan. As always, our school will make sure your child is safe during these situations.

Enrollment and Attendance

Children must be at least 4 years old by September 15, or one year from attending kindergarten. Pre-registration will begin in the spring of the year. Registration materials are available from the elementary secretary. Final registration will occur in August. Families who are interested in registering their child after the start of the school year are welcome to do so provided there are still openings available.

We encourage families to make appointments for their children on vacation days or in-service days.

It is the educational philosophy of the St. Ansgar Community School District that regular attendance by all students at school is essential and cannot be duplicated by other methods.

Students are unable to obtain the maximum opportunities from the educational program offered without attendance at scheduled classes and activities. Consequently, the Board of Directors, the Administrators and the Staff of the St. Ansgar Community School District expects that students shall be in attendance at scheduled classes and activities for one hundred and sixty five (165) days per academic year.

The exception to the rule of 165 days per year attendance would be in the case of an emergency, doctor or dental appointments, authorized religious holidays, and school sponsored or approved activities. The only absence, which constitutes such an emergency would be illness of the student or a death or serious illness in the immediate family. All absences, other than illness or funeral should be approved by the school in advance for the absence to be excused. A student is never able to "make-up" the educational benefits gained from actual attendance in the classroom. As a result, even an excused absence may affect the grade accordingly. Also, if a student misses a great

deal of school, it may be recommended that the student be retained the next school year.

School attendance is the responsibility of the students and parents. Excessive absences must be reported to the county attorney. When a student is going to be absent from school, the parent should call the school letting the office know the reason. This should be done between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. If a student is going to be late to school or leave early from school, a note should be sent with the child to give to the teacher or the parent should call the office.

All absences will result in a reasonable effort by the school to contact the student's parent/guardian in order to confirm the student's safety, unless the school has been previously notified by the parent/guardian of the absence in writing or by phone.

If a student comes in after 10:00 a.m., they will be counted 1/2 day absent. If a student leaves before 2:00 p.m., they will be counted 1/2 day absent. If a student is gone more than an hour and a half in the middle of the day, they will be counted 1/2 day absent.

After 5 absences, excused or unexcused, or a combination of both, a letter will be sent home.

After 10 absences, excused or unexcused, or a combination of both, parents will be asked to meet with the principal.

After 15 absences, excused or unexcused, or a combination of both, the county attorney will be notified.

A truant student is defined as any child over seven and under sixteen years of age, in proper physical and mental condition to attend school, who fails to attend school regularly without reasonable excuse for the absence. If we feel that the student is truant, the county attorney will be notified.

Parent Permission

Students must have a note from a parent or they will not be allowed to go home with another student or get off the bus at a different location. If a note is not written, a call to the teacher letting him/her know what the plan is before preschool is dismissed is needed.

Separation

Please leave your child at the outside school door. The teachers will help your child check into the classroom and get ready for the day.

The suggestions below will help:

Establish routines – Give your child a hug, a kiss, then leave, and stick to it! Establish trust-Tell your child that school is a fun place to play and learn. Establish the fact that the teachers will take good care of him/her while you are apart.

Your job/My job-Tell your child that it is his/her job to go to preschool and my job to go to (workplace-_____). Remember to explain even a stay-at-home parent's job is taking care of the family's home.

Acknowledge feelings – Tell your child you know she/he is upset because you are leaving, but in a little while s/he will get to play with toys. Establish the idea that the teachers will help her/him find something to play.

Appropriate Preschool Indoor & Outdoor Clothing

Please have your child come to school in play clothes so she/he may freely enter into all activities such as art, floor, and outdoor play. Rubber-soled and closed-toe shoes are safest for the feet. Practice tying a bow often with your child.

Make sure your child is dressed and prepared for all weather daily, since we play outside throughout the school year. During cold months, children must have boots, snow pants, mittens, and a hat. Practice having your child dress herself/himself. Please label all personal items with your child's name.

Some other general rules on dress for the entire elementary school:

- T-shirts must have acceptable wording or students will have to call home for other clothing or wear the shirt inside out (if wording cannot be seen that way)
- Tank tops, or tops that are low cut, have midriff exposed or have excessively large arm holes are not acceptable. Students will be asked to change their clothes.
- Shorts may be worn throughout the school year. HOWEVER, they must be shorts that are appropriate for school aged kids (not too short). Be aware of the weather and that your child dresses to be outside at recess time. If it is cold, and your child wears shorts, they will still go outside for recess, unless they have a doctor's note.
- Footwear must be worn at all times. Tennis shoes are required for physical education class. Sandals that cover the toes and have a heel strap on them are OK for school, but may cause problems at recess. Flip Flops are not appropriate for our school.

Communication and Involvement

Children want and need the important adults in their lives to be excited about them and what they are doing in school. For this reason, the STA Preschools have developed ways to keep you informed.

- Stop By Visits- Parents are welcome to stop by the classroom for up to a 30 minute visit. However, please do not visit the first two weeks or the last two weeks.
- Volunteering: Opportunities will arise throughout the year to involve parents.
- Newsletters: Preschool specific newsletters will be sent home in your child's folder. They will contain information about recent and upcoming happenings in the classroom as well as other important information. Daily, check and clean out your child's folder and book bag. This can be part of you and your child's daily routine.
- Conferences
- Home Visits: To better foster the communication between the home and the school, home visits will be scheduled at your convenience. The focus will vary depending on need, but many include these topics: student performance, questions or concerns, or simply a time to converse with your child's teacher about other relative topics. These visits are simple and do not need prior planning on the family's part.
- FYI Notes: Random notes will be sent home with your child in his or her folder when needed. Parents should feel free to communicate with their child's teacher the same way, but please remind your child to give notes to the teacher when she/he arrives daily.

Please note that pick-up and drop-off times are not the best time for your child's teacher to engage in lengthy conversations, regardless of the content of the conversation. Please feel free to call or schedule a more appropriate time to talk to your child's teacher.

Transitions

Home-school connections are crucial to the transition to kindergarten. The child's family provides the consistency and continuity necessary for a young child to be successful. Making a change from one program to another can sometimes be difficult for a young child whether the transition is within the same building or in another location. We will partner with the family to make the transition as smooth as possible by connecting family members with the next program's staff. We will provide information about enrollment policies and procedures, program options, and arrange for a classroom visit whenever possible.

Medical Emergencies and Notification of Accidents

The St. Ansgar Community School District has in place a "Safety Procedures Booklet" that describes the following situations and procedures to follow:

- Emergency phone numbers
- Fire Procedures
- Severe weather
- Bomb threats
- Physical threats/Armed intruder
- Evacuations
- Crisis Intervention Plan, Crisis Intervention Steps, and Media procedures
- Accidental injury or illness procedures for life threatening and non-life threatening situations
- School crisis team members and a checklist to use
- List of CPR/First aid experienced persons in each building

This booklet will be posted by the telephone and included in the first aid kit. The booklet will be reviewed by each staff member at the beginning of each school year and when changes are made to it.

In the event that your child receives a minor, non-life threatening injury during their time at preschool, our teacher will assess the situation and apply first aid as needed. Minor cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water. Bumps will be treated by applying ice to the injured area. Any incident or injuries will be documented on an injury and illness form and a copy will be given to the parent within 24 hours of the incident.

All staff will have immediate access to a phone that allows them to summon help in an emergency. The telephone numbers of the fire department, police department, hospital, and poison control will be posted by each phone with an outside line. Emergency contact information for each child and staff member will be kept readily available. The list of emergency telephone numbers, and copies of emergency contact information and authorization for emergency transport will be taken anytime children leave the school in care of school staff.

Visitors

All visitors are welcome but upon entering the building must report to the school office. You will receive a visitor's badge after signing in. School age visitors are not allowed during the school day unless escorted and supervised by an adult. We like to have parents visit the school. Parents are welcome to visit at any time, with the exception of the first two weeks of school, on party days, and during the last two weeks of school.

Child Guidance and Discipline

Teaching staff will equitably use positive guidance, redirection, and planning ahead to prevent problems. They will encourage appropriate behavior through the use of

consistent clear rules, and involving children in problem solving to foster the child's own ability to become self-directed. Where the child understands words, discipline will be explained to the child before and at the time of any disciplinary action. Teaching staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property and learn to be responsible for their actions. Teaching staff will use discipline that is consistent, clear, and understandable to the child. They will help children learn to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs, and learn turn taking.

The teaching staff is highly trained, responsive, respectful, and purposeful. The teachers anticipate and take steps to prevent challenging behaviors. They evaluate and change their responses based on individual needs. When children have challenging behaviors teachers promote prosocial behavior by:

- Interacting in a respectful manner with all children.
- Modeling turn taking and sharing as well as caring behaviors.
- Helping children negotiate their interactions with one another and with shared materials.
- Engaging children in the care of their classroom and ensuring that each child has an opportunity to contribute to the group.
- Encouraging children to listen to one another and helping them to provide comfort when others are sad or distressed.

Teaching staff will guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct in relationship to peers and adults. Children will be taught social, communication, and emotional skills. If a child displays persistent, serious, and challenging behavior, the teaching staff, parents, and AEA support staff will work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

Aggressive physical behavior toward staff or children is unacceptable. Teaching staff will intervene immediately when a child is physically aggressive to protect all of the children and encourage more acceptable behavior.

For acts of aggression and fighting (biting, scratching, hitting) staff will set appropriate expectations for children and guide them in solving problems. This positive guidance will be the usual technique for managing children with challenging behaviors rather than punishing them for having problems they have not yet learned to solve. In addition, staff may: (1) separate the children involved; (2) immediately comfort the individual who is injured; (3) care for any injury suffered by the victim involved in the incident; (4) notify parents or legal guardians of children involved in the incident; (5) review the adequacy of the teaching staff supervision, appropriateness of program activities, and administrative corrective action if there is a recurrence.

The program does not, and will not, employ any of the following disciplinary procedures:

- Harsh or abusive tone of voice with the children nor make threats or derogatory remarks.
- Physical punishment, including spanking, hitting, shaking, or grabbing.
- Any punishment that would humiliate, frighten, or subject a child to neglect.
- Withhold or threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

Assistance

Through observation or information gathered for Project Gold (observation and evaluation system used in PK), the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a development delay or other special need, she/he will communicate this to family during a conference, sharing documentation of the concern. Suggestions for next steps may include the following, with the knowledge and consent of parents:

- The teacher requests assistance from the GEI (General Education Interventions) as an early intervention process. This team engages in problem identification, plan interventions, provide support, and make outside resources available to those individuals requesting assistance. The GEI team is available and functional for all students and teachers in the building.
- A request made to Central Rivers AEA for support and additional ideas or more formalized testing.

The preschool teacher would assist in arranging for development screening and referral for diagnostic assessment.

Snacks/Foods and Nutrition

We have an opportunity to help children learn about foods, to enjoy a variety of foods from their own culture and others, and to help them begin to appreciate that their bodies need to be strong, flexible, and healthy. Eating moderately, eating a variety of foods, and eating in a relaxed atmosphere are healthy habits for young children to form.

A snack is served each day to each preschool section. Two food groups will be represented at each snack time as outlined in USDA guidelines. The preschool serves a variety of nutritional snacks, and encourages children to expand their tastes by at least trying a portion of the food offered.

All food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines. Clean, sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day. Staff discards any food with expired dates. Food that is hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit is kept out of children's reach. Foods requiring refrigeration will be kept cold until served.

Classroom Animals and Pets

No animals are to be inside the St. Ansgar Elementary Preschool classroom at any time. If you, as a parent or legal guardian, want to bring your family pet to share with your child's classroom you are welcome. However, all animals must remain outside the school buildings during the visit. The preschool teacher ensures that the animal does not create an unsafe or unsanitary condition. The animal would appear to be in good health and have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animal is fully immunized and suitable for contact with children. The teacher would ensure staff and children practice good hygiene and hand washing when coming into contact with the animal and after coming into contact with the animal. Teaching staff supervises all interactions between children and animals and instructs children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals.

Any children allergic to the pet will not be exposed to the animal. Reptiles are not allowed because of salmonella. The classroom teacher is responsible for checking requirements have been met.

Grievance Policy

Open and honest communication between families and the preschool program is an essential component of a high quality early childhood program. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we want to encourage you to address your concern to your child's teacher. If additional help is needed, either party may ask for the assistance from the elementary principal. If you have a concern regarding some aspect of the program or policy, please contact the elementary principal who is the program administrator for the preschool. If you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the Superintendent of St. Ansgar Community Schools.

As part of our program assessment, in the spring of each year, we also provide you with a family questionnaire to evaluate our program. This information helps us to assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Preschool Transportation Policy

The school district is not mandated to provide transportation for preschool students. However, we are offering this service as a benefit to our families. It is a privilege to ride the school bus, not a right, and may be revoked due to the behavior of the child. Along with the general bus rules, the following are additional guidelines set for preschool students alone:

1. A sibling/student (4th grade or older) or an adult must assist the preschool student on and off the bus. These people should be waiting at the bus pick up/drop off location before the bus arrives. If no one is there, the child will remain on

the bus and return back to the school.

2. The "Buddy System" will be used for the preschool child on the bus. The buddy system is designed to have an older student/ sibling sit with the preschool student near the front of the bus (assigned by the bus driver.) The "buddy" will provide appropriate interaction with the preschool student to keep them occupied while being transported to and from school.
3. Concerns about behavior will be communicated between the bus driver and the parents. If concerns persist, the transportation coordinator will be contacted, followed by the building principal and/or superintendent.

General Bus Rules/Guidelines

1. Pupils are under the responsibility and direction of the bus driver.
2. Pupils shall be on time for the bus both morning and evening and shall remain seated while the bus is in motion.
3. Pupils shall converse in normal tones; loud and vulgar language is prohibited.
4. When the bus is crossing a railroad track, all conversations must stop until the bus has crossed the tracks.
5. Pupils shall not extend their hands, arms or head through the bus windows, and shall not open or close the bus windows without the permission of the driver.
6. Pupils shall keep the bus clean, and refrain from damaging it.
7. They shall be courteous to the driver, to fellow pupils and passerby.
8. Entering and leaving the bus, at school loading stations and at highway bus stops, shall be accomplished in orderly fashion and in accordance with instructions.
9. Pupils shall refrain from crowding or pushing and shall go directly to their seats upon entering the bus.
10. Pupils shall refrain from talking to the driver while the bus is in motion.
11. Roughhousing on the bus is prohibited, and pupils shall keep feet off the seats and sharp objects off the upholstery.
12. Pupils shall not throw objects about in the bus nor out through the windows.
13. Shooting paper-wads or other material in the bus is not permissible.
14. Pupils should follow all drivers' directions, sit in their seat, do not hit, kick, push, yell, scream or swear.
15. Books and other property shall be properly stored out of the way and the aisle shall be clear at all times.
16. Pupils shall avoid playing or loitering on the highway when waiting for the bus and shall cross the road in accordance with instructions from the driver.
17. Drinking pop is not allowed on the school bus.

Consequences for not following the rules

1st Violation: Driver will notify the office and complete a discipline form given to the

principal.

2nd Violation: Driver will complete a discipline report form and will meet with administration. Parents will be notified by the principal. Suspension from the bus could occur.

3rd Violation: Driver will meet with administration. Parents will be notified and suspension from riding the bus will occur.

Severe disturbance may go to step 2 and 3.