

Student Handbook 2023-2024



Black River Middle School Home of the Bulldogs

A New Jersey “School to Watch”

**133 North Road
Chester, NJ 07930
(908) 879-6363
www.chester-nj.org**

This Student Planner belongs to:

Name: _____

Homeroom Teacher: _____

Grade: _____

WELCOME TO BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Black River Middle School community welcomes all students to an exciting year of learning and working together. This manual contains school guidelines and procedures.

As principal, I'm committed to helping students advance as life-long learners. The school community of professionals, parents, and students will accomplish school goals through the pursuit of academic achievement, intellectual competence, social skills, independent effort, personal responsibility, and respect for the individual. All this, while meeting the unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of the rapidly changing teenager, offers a significant challenge for a great school year.

I look forward to getting to know each of you as we learn and have fun together!

Mr. White

GENERAL RULES /REGULATIONS

- School begins promptly at 7:35 a.m. and ends at 2:25 p.m. Students are expected to be on time. Refer to tardy policy on pg. 8 for further info.
- For safety purposes, students must walk, not run, in the hallways at all times.
- Be courteous and attentive to adults and peers. Be responsible for personal and school property. Be a leader. Contribute and cooperate in class. Be concerned. Be mindful of others. Be industrious. Prepare your work; do it well.
- Students may not walk home without a note.
- Students must be signed out at the main office by a parent/guardian if they leave before 2:25.
- Backpacks cannot be dropped off at lockers.
- Bring all necessary work and materials to class.
- Enrichment is not for completing homework.
- Refrain from fighting, pushing, horseplay, or any form of physical contact.
- Lockers are school property and may be subject to searches at the discretion of the administrators. Lockers should be kept neat and organized. Students are not permitted to open or remove items from any other student's locker.
- Students staying after school must have written permission and must be picked up on time.
- Gum chewing is not permitted.
- Lasers and laser pointers are not permitted.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Students will not receive school-issued Chrome Books until the parent/guardian completes the Acceptable Use policy on Power School.

Personal electronic devices (cell phones, cameras, Smartwatches, ear buds) may not be used during school. Exceptions are devices used for direct instruction under teacher supervision. Expensive equipment brought to school is at the student's risk.

Personal devices are to be turned off and kept in lockers during school hours. Furthermore, students are prohibited from using cell phones, cell phone cameras, Smartwatches, ear buds, and from sending or receiving text messages during school. Students may call home from a school phone for emergencies or lunches only. Use of school phones is at the discretion of the faculty.

The penalties for infraction to the above-stated rules are as follows:

1st Offense- electronic device is held in the office until the end of the day.

2nd Offense- Parent must retrieve the device from the administrators.

3rd Offense- Detention

4th Offense- Suspension

Please note that additional consequences are at the discretion of the principal based on the severity of the offense.

INTERNET POLICY

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior on the school's computer network, just as they are in a classroom or on a school playground.

Communications on the network are often public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. The use of the network is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. Students must uphold the Acceptable Use Policy.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking and recreational online usage is not permitted during school hours. Furthermore, social networking outside of school that adversely

impacts students, faculty, or the community at large may result in disciplinary action at the principal's discretion.

BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

All members of the professional staff, parents/guardians, and students are directly responsible for positive behavior in our school. The goal is to ensure an environment in which desirable conduct is encouraged through positive support. Black River Middle School students are frequently advised of community and class expectations for responsible behavior in all areas of the school, on school grounds, and at all school functions whether they are in school or in a non-school location.

The Black River Middle School community is committed to fostering academic success and peace in the classroom. As a direct result of student effort and parent and teacher support, Black River Middle School students learn discipline as part of their regular instructional program. Our purpose is to ensure that students understand the positive and negative effects of their behavior and to assist them in making responsible decisions.

Adult interventions are focused on helping the student regain self-control and increase skills. Teachers work with students each day to motivate feelings of hopefulness and to instill confidence in the belief that they are and can learn to be responsible. Opportunities to learn and practice positive behaviors are embedded in daily success and the consequences of unacceptable behaviors.

Students have the right to learn without a pattern of interruptions and to socialize at school without concern for aggressive or hostile actions. The staff continually strives to help students recognize conflict as part of daily life. Class and school rules are in place to guide the skills needed to develop and maintain positive relationships and personal confidence. Parent/guardian support is also essential.

The Black River Middle School approach to discipline emphasizes prevention by establishing clear expectations and imparting conflict resolution skills for collaborative problem solving. Teachers use direct instruction to develop interpersonal communication and create classroom communities of high achievers and confident learners. Our goal is to provide students with the most nurturing and supportive atmosphere possible.

Major Offenses

The following violations are considered major offenses and thus will be handled by the school administration. A stricter consequence will be imposed by the administration as deemed appropriate based on the severity of the behavior:

- Fighting
- Destroying property
- Abusive, vulgar, or threatening language to a teacher, staff member, or other student
- Openly defiant or disrespectful to a teacher or substitute
- Abuse/misuse of school-issued technology
- Skipping school or class
- Stealing
- Lying and cheating
- Forging notes and/or other forms
- Possession of sexually explicit material
- Possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, fireworks, weapons, illegal drugs, lighters, matches, and look-alike substances or objects
- All acts classified as criminal by the laws of the county and state

Students suspended from school will not be permitted to participate in after-school activities, including sports, on the day and/or days of the suspension. Furthermore, students suspended from school may not be permitted to participate in future activities including sports and field trips occurring during the school day. Finally, attendance on the Washington, DC, trip will not be permitted.

MESSAGES AND FORGOTTEN ITEMS

Classroom disruptions interfere with teaching and learning. Therefore, parents are strongly urged to keep personal messages and delivery of forgotten items to a minimum. Lunches brought to the office during school hours will be distributed to the students by the cafeteria aides during lunch period.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an important part of learning. It prepares students for learning as they read, write, and study material already presented in class. While teachers may have slightly different requirements, parents can generally expect homework to be given daily for a maximum of 60-90 minutes; however, students in the advanced math or language arts classes may have assignments that

require additional time. Your child should also be prepared to work on long-term projects and assignments. It is the student's responsibility to complete all work.

Homework is posted daily to Google Classroom. If a student is absent due to illness, he/she can check assignments online and upon return to school seek extra help. Students may request class work during an extended absence by emailing the teacher directly. Class work will be available after school hours in the front office.

Homework: It is the Teacher's Responsibility to:

- Design homework that is relevant to material presented in class.
- Design homework that broadens, deepens, or reinforces the student's knowledge.
- Not use homework for punitive reasons.
- Evaluate and provide feedback on assignments.
- Use discretion to decide the type, number, and length of assignments.

These guidelines are suggestive, rather than delimiting or mandatory, and should be based on the level of ability.

Homework: It is the Student's Responsibility to:

- Record all assignments in the agenda planner or on Google Drive.
- Understand the assignment.
- Complete the assignment as outlined or explained by the teacher.
- Ask questions of the teacher.
- Complete work on time and write legibly.
- Determine a reasonable schedule with teacher and parental guidance.
- Accept that purposeful homework assignments are part of the school program.
- Do his/her best work on assignments at home and in the classroom.

Homework: It is the Parent's Responsibility to:

- Establish a time and place in the home for the child to work on homework each day.
- Assist the child with homework when necessary without actually doing the assignment for the child.
- Check the child's homework to be sure it is completed each day.
- Agree that homework is a priority and act accordingly.

- Check the parent portal regularly.

EXTENDED TRIPS / VACATIONS

Notify the nurse of any extended trip or vacation plans. Please be aware that such trips cause students to miss important instructional time, and students may find it challenging to make up missed work. The parent assumes responsibility to ensure that the student's educational requirements are met. Students are responsible for checking online assignments during their absence. Teachers are not required to prepare assignments in advance.

PUPIL PROGRESS

Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to view pupil progress online by accessing the PowerSchool Parent Portal from the "parent" section of the main website. Passwords are required. Lost passwords may be requested via a link on www.chester-nj.org. Click on *PowerSchool Parent Portal—Lost Password*.

Students' choice of world language (Spanish, French, Chinese) cannot be changed after the first marking period.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued four times per year: November, January, March, and June. Report cards are distributed online via Power School.

VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

- Visitors must sign in at the main office and wear a visitor badge.
- Parents are not permitted to leave the office unattended.
- Board of Education policy states, "Visitors may not consult with the teaching staff or pupils during class time without the principal's permission."
- Parents must arrange an appointment to meet with a teacher.

HONOR ROLL

Principal's Honor Roll- Straight A's in all subjects.

Honor Roll- B's or better in all subjects.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

In the event of a delayed opening, school begins at 9:35 a.m. Early dismissal is at 12:25 p.m.

School-related closings and delays will be communicated by the superintendent through the district's automated calling system. Your phone number must be on file at your child's school in order to receive a call. Therefore, please be sure to complete the requested emergency information on the Power School system.

DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Chester School District to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, ancestry, national origin, or social or economic status in its educational programs or activities and employment policies as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and N.J.A.C. 6:4-1.1 et seq. Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Tanya Dawson, Affirmative Action Officer, Chester Schools, 50 North Rd., Chester, NJ 07930.

BULLYING POLICY

Students are expected to treat one another with civility and respect. Acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying are not tolerated. Such acts have the effect of insulting or demeaning a pupil or group of pupils, and must be reported to the principal. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the New Jersey Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) policy.

DRESS GUIDELINES

Parents and students are responsible for proper attire. Selections should reflect awareness of health and safety while keeping the ultimate goal of education in mind. Clothing that creates a needless distraction will not be permitted. The following items are considered to be inappropriate:

- Skirts, shorts, and pants worn below the hips.
- See-through clothing that exposes undergarments or anatomy.
- Short-shorts and mini skirts.
- Tops with spaghetti straps or off-the-shoulder.
- No undergarments showing.
- Tube tops, halter tops, and tops that expose the midriff may only be worn under a covering shirt that is buttoned.

- Tops or dresses with inappropriate neck and back lines.
- Pajamas/slippers
- Undergarments worn as outer clothing.
- Low riding pants or shorts that expose the midriff and/or undergarments.
- T-shirts with lewd or inappropriate messages.
- No hats or hoodies are to be worn inside the building.
- Bicycle pants/spandex clothing is not allowed.
- Shoes with wheels are not permitted.
- Jewelry that can be viewed as a weapon, such as a bracelet with spikes, is not allowed.

Students with inappropriate clothing will be required to call home for a change of wardrobe or will have to wear their gym clothes for the day.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The requirements for physical education class are:

- Proper attire- a complete change of athletic clothing must be worn, including t-shirt or sweatshirt, shorts or sweatpants, socks and sneakers (tied tightly). No shorts with zippers, snaps, buttons, or anything sharp permitted. No short-shorts. No sneakers without laces or backs. No school clothes are to be worn over or under physical education clothes.
- Students are not permitted to wear jewelry of any type during gym class for the safety and well being of all. Therefore, if a student is considering piercing ears or any other body part, it should be planned over the summer or during an extended vacation.
- No school team uniforms.
- No gum.
- Hair must be tied back out of the face.
- Do not leave gym without permission.
- Do not use equipment in class unless a teacher has given you permission.
- Immediately seek a teacher for any injury.
- No students will be allowed to participate in after-school athletic events if they are not dressed for physical education class on that day.
- No electronic devices are permitted in the locker rooms.
- The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items from the locker rooms.

LUNCH (CAFETORIUM)

Students may bring lunch from home or purchase a meal in the cafetorium. All students must report to, and eat their lunch in, the cafetorium. Students will keep the cafetorium clean and a pleasant place to eat. Students are responsible for:

- Depositing refuse in the proper receptacles.
- Leaving the tables, chairs, and floor clean.

Failure to comply will result in loss of outside privileges. In addition, the district's food policy stipulates:

- Individual parties or celebrations (pizza parties, birthday parties, etc.) are not permitted.
- A nut-free table will be provided.

CAFETORIUM REGULATIONS

- Enter and leave the cafetorium at a walk.
- Maintain a single line at each service area.
- Be seated and remain seated at your table until dismissed by the teacher or aide in charge.
- A maximum of 12 students per table.
- Refrain from unruly behavior.
- Leave the cafetorium only with the permission of a teacher or aide.
- Conversation at lunch tables is permitted and desirable. However, loud and boisterous talk, yelling, screaming, etc. are not acceptable.
- Do not throw any objects.
- Supervising staff members will enforce the district food policy and refer students to the office for inappropriate behavior.
- On days when students are allowed outside, proper behavior is expected, or this privilege will be revoked.
- Students are not to take food from the cafetorium.
- Leave the tables, chairs, and floor clean and suitable for use by other students.

FOOD POLICY

Some students have severe food allergies. Therefore, dessert foods brought from home to be shared in the school environment will not be permitted, except at public events such as school dances. Parents will be notified of any classroom activities that involve food, and a food alert form will be sent home prior to the event for permission to participate or opt out of the activity. Parents are

urged to notify the school nurse of any known food allergies.

PARENT PICK UP/ DROP OFF

Students must be dropped off at the gym entrance no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and no later than 7:35 a.m. The door will be locked until 7:30 a.m. After 7:35 a.m., students should be dropped off at the front entrance. Afternoon pickup is at 2:25 p.m. at the gym entrance. Cars will be permitted to depart after all buses have been dismissed. Students are not permitted to cross between buses to reach their ride. The safety of our students is our primary concern.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Students must ride on their assigned bus to and from school unless transported by their parent. Students are to get on and off the bus at the designated bus stops. **Students may not ride a bus to which they have not been assigned.**

The bus is an extension of the school system, and, as such, the same standards of behavior that apply in a classroom apply on a bus. The driver is in full charge of the bus at all times.

GENERAL BUS CONDUCT RULES

For the safety of all riders, students will adhere to the following rules of conduct and behavior:

- Respect the driver at all times.
- Respect the other passengers at all times.
- Respect the property of other passengers.
- Remain in seats and keep aisles clear.
- No gum chewing.

While at the bus stop, students will:

- Be on time for the bus.
- Keep at least 6 feet away from the edge of the road when the bus approaches.
- Do not engage in pushing, shoving, ball playing, game playing, or any other activity that could place students in danger of being injured.
- If crossing a road to board the bus, cross in front of the bus and only after the driver signals that it is safe to cross.

While on the bus, students will:

- Behave in an appropriate manner so as not to distract the driver.

- No throwing objects of any sort.
- Remain in assigned seat at all times (no changing of seats).
- Keep head, arms, and legs in the bus, not extended out the window.
- Speak in a reasonable tone of voice. Do not call out to passersby or shout to other passengers.
- Keep the bus clean. No eating, drinking, gum chewing, or littering on the bus.
- Fighting, spitting, threatening of other students, and vandalism are strictly prohibited.

Upon departing the bus, students will:

- Remain seated until the bus has completely stopped and the driver has opened the door.
- Cross in front of the bus. Cross only when the driver gives the go ahead.
- Go directly into the school building, to home, or to a previously arranged destination.
- Refrain from pushing, shoving, or engaging in any unruly behavior that could endanger other departing passengers.

The Board has authorized principals to allow temporary changes if a parent has a medical emergency. However, this can be done only if the sending and receiving parents of all children involved submit written permission to the building principal.

At all other times children must board and depart the bus only at the stop to which he/she has been assigned.

ITEMS PROHIBITED ON THE BUS

At all times the following are prohibited at the bus stop or on the bus:

- Cigarettes or other smoking items
- Combustible materials such as lighters and matches
- Weapons of any sort
- Alcohol/drugs
- Any hazardous materials
- Food, drink, and glass bottles

Possession of any of the above will be reported to the Chester Police.

PENALTIES FOR MISCONDUCT OR VIOLATION OF BUS RULES

A student may be excluded from bus privileges by the building principal for disciplinary reasons. The parent or legal guardian will be required to provide transportation to and from school during the time when bus privileges are revoked. The following penalties will be enforced when students violate the aforementioned rules and procedures:

1st Offense

The driver will fill out a Bus Conduct Report that will be given to the building principal. The principal or designee will assign an in-school punishment to the student. The parent/legal guardian will be notified. If, however, the first offense is serious enough, it may result in suspension of bus privileges, as deemed necessary by the principal. This suspension is normally for three days; however, it may be for 10 days or more based on the severity of the offense.

2nd Offense

The building principal or designee will contact the parent/guardian either by phone or in a meeting to alert them to the offense. The student will receive an after-school detention. However, it may also result in suspension of bus privileges for 2-5 days or more based on the severity of the offense.

3rd Offense

The student will lose his/her privilege for a period of seven days or more based on the severity of the offense. Additionally, a parent meeting will be required before the student regains bus privileges. In this process the student will be afforded a hearing before the building principal or other supervisor in the principal's absence before the loss of bus privileges occurs.

4th and Subsequent Offenses

The student will lose bus privileges for a period of 5-10 school days or more with additional in-school penalties assigned by the principal. The parent/guardian will be required to meet with the principal or designee. The student and his parent/guardian will be entitled to a hearing with the principal before the loss of bus privileges occurs. Additionally, the parent/guardian has the right to

appeal this penalty to the Superintendent. Penalties assessed by the principal include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Apology to the driver and other students
- Meeting with law enforcement personnel
- Special projects agreed upon by principal and parents

Continued infractions of the rules of bus conduct will result in a hearing before the Board of Education. This could result in a loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the school year.

FIELD TRIPS

Students have much to learn by experiencing the community and the world through meaningful field trips that are designed to enrich the classroom experience. All field trips are supervised by teachers and approved by the principal. No student will be denied participation on field trips due to financial need.

If a student receives an out-of-school suspension at any time during the school year, future attendance on overnight field trips will not be permitted, and attendance on daytime field trips will be at the discretion of the principal. The following guidelines should be followed when attending a field trip:

Appropriate Dress – The key is to remember the students are representing the school. Therefore, neat, appropriate attire with no obscene slogans or pictures on shirts is expected. In addition, no blue jeans, short-shorts, cutoffs, or bare midriffs are permitted.

School Rules- are in effect at all times during trips.

Facility Rules- Rules of the facility being visited are to be strictly followed.

Bus Company Regulations on Field Trips

1. Bring only an individual snack. No large bags of candy or snacks.
2. No drinks or food on the bus. No carbonated beverages. No glass-bottled beverages.
3. Personal electronic devices are permitted on the bus, but they must be left on the bus when touring the field trip site.
4. The bus driver is not responsible for items lost, stolen, or left on the bus.

Touring

It is expected that students will be attentive listeners when visiting a field trip site. Courteous behavior is expected when guides, teachers, or other site personnel are speaking. Students must remain with their group and group leader unless otherwise instructed.

ABSENTEEISM

Students are expected to report to school except for illness or emergencies. Parents/guardians must contact the school nurse at 908-879-6363 to report an absence. The principal will be notified of extended absenteeism and/or tardiness, and disciplinary action may result. The student is responsible for missed work upon returning to school.

TARDINESS TO SCHOOL

Students are expected to be in school on time. “On time” means that students are seated at their desks when the day begins at 7:35 a.m. Students not at their desks when attendance is taken will be marked absent. Upon confirmation of attendance, the absence will automatically be converted to tardy.

Students who are late must report to the main office to sign in. A record of tardiness will be maintained. Students will be subject to consequences at the principal’s discretion for excessive tardiness.

Students must arrive to school no later than 11:00 a.m. in order to participate in after-school activities, including sports.

TARDINESS TO CLASS

Teachers have been directed to see that students arrive to class by the designated time. The schedule of penalties for tardiness to class is as follows:

1 st & 2 nd offense -	Reprimand by teacher
3 rd offense-	Detention with teacher
4 th offense-	Detention with teacher, parents contacted
5 th offense-	Detention with principal