

Gwendolyn Brooks
Parent - Student Handbook

2016-2017

1. Obey the driver and remain in your seat.
2. Do not throw objects on or from the bus.
3. Keep head and hands inside the bus.
4. Do not eat or drink on the bus.
5. Be at your bus stop five minutes before the scheduled time.
6. Be courteous to classmates/neighbors at bus stops and while bus is traveling.

Buses begin arriving at Brooks about 8:50 each morning. As buses arrive, they line up along the front drive and in the bus slots until supervisors begin unloading the buses at 8:50 a.m. (9:00 a.m. Wednesdays). All students riding the bus enter through the main entrance or doors by the kindergarten rooms and go directly to class.

Families DO NOT have the option of having a child ride to school or home on a bus that is different from the one assigned for their residence.

Families with children in private daycare settings do have the option of requesting bus exceptions related to the location of the daycare provider. To be eligible for a daycare bus exception, the student must be eligible for bus service based on where they live. Additionally, daycare exceptions are not reviewed until September 15th each year – meaning that daycare families must have alternate arrangements in place until exception requests are approved in mid-September.

In the event that a bus is running significantly late, you will receive a call from our ConnectEd system. When that call goes out, the bus has loaded or will be loading very shortly.

Bicycles/Skates/Scooters/Skateboards:

Students have the opportunity to ride bicycles to school. Bikes are to be **walked** on school property and **locked** in the bike racks during the school day. If skateboards or scooters (not motorized) are ridden to school, they must be locked at the bike rack. They cannot be stored in classrooms.

Children should obey all traffic rules when traveling to and from school.

ART, MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students will receive instruction in these special areas as scheduled. Necessary supplies, materials, and gym shoes are required to participate.

Art.....	50 minutes, one time/week for K-5
PE.....	25 minutes, three times/week for K-5
Music.....	50 minutes, one time/week for 4 th and 5 th grade; 25 minutes, two times/week for Kdg-3 rd grade; in some cases 3 rd grade may have one 50 min. session/week.

ATTENDANCE

Expectations

Gwendolyn Brooks staff will monitor each student's attendance and punctuality and inform parents or guardians of any attendance problems or chronic tardiness. Attendance is maintained in the eschool student information system.

Parents must report absences to the office at 375-3200, and then press #3 by 9:10 a.m. The school office will contact families of a student which has not been reported.

In the case of a known extended absence of one week or more, a call must be made to the attendance clerk or building secretary, and a written note/letter re: this absence must be given to the attendance clerk or building secretary. Students who have been sick should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. If the sickness is interpreted to be a contagious disease, readmission to school should be with a back-to-school permit signed by a physician.

Excessive Absenteeism

Gwendolyn Brooks considers absenteeism excessive when it significantly interferes with a student's learning, as reflected in academic performance or social development. The Regional Office of Education Guidelines state that 5% or more absent days in a year is considered truant.

Tardiness

If a student is not physically in their classroom by 9:05 a.m. (9:15 Wednesdays), he/she should report to the main office for a pass. Please note that students enter the building at 8:50 and are in the classroom by 9:05 to begin the activities of the day.

Make-up Work

If a student is unable to attend school for two or less days, he/she will receive make-up work upon returning to school and be given an appropriate due date. For extended emergencies/illness, a parent may call the office on the morning of the third day of absence to request make-up work. If the extended illness results in an absence of more than two weeks, a homebound tutor may be available.

Early Dismissal

For safety reasons, a parent must come into the school office to sign out a child who is being dismissed early. We have found that it is best to wait and send for the child after you have arrived to sign them out for the early dismissal. **Any changes to your child's dismissal procedure (ex: riding the bus rather than being picked up) must be called in no later than 2:00pm. We ask that any requests for early dismissal be made prior to 3:10 pm.**

Vacations/Extended Leaves

Every effort should be made to have students in school when it is in session. When an absence must occur due to a vacation or extended leave, **students will not receive homework in advance.** Experience has shown that it is difficult at best for teachers to accurately predict homework and for students to do homework properly on vacation. Upon return to school, students will receive make-up work and an appropriate due date.

BIRTHDAYS AND PARTIES

The Gwendolyn Brooks PTA sponsors special seasonal parties. Other treats, birthday parties, and favors are not part of our school program. **No birthday treats or gifts (i.e. balloons) for students are permitted at school.** Our school recognizes all student birthdays by announcing names over the intercom system and giving a birthday pencil to each student. Invitations to birthday parties are to be handled by parents. Please do not send invitations to be handed out at school. This helps to avoid hurt feelings which result for those children who do not receive an invitation.

CONFERENCES/VISITATIONS

Communication with your child's teacher is vital to his/her success in school. Parent-Teacher conference times are scheduled twice each school year. If at any other time you feel the need for a conference, please contact the teacher.

1. Visitors shall pre-arrange visits to the school with the building principal at least 24 hours prior to the visit.
2. In the absence of unusual circumstances previously discussed with the principal, school visits shall be limited to a reasonable length of time (one hour per day).
3. School visits shall be limited to adults.
4. Visits to individual classrooms should be made only when the regularly assigned teacher is present.
5. School and classroom visits shall not be disruptive or in any way interfere with the instructional program. All visits and visitors shall be subject to the authority of the building principal that may restrict or limit visitors as he/she considers necessary.
6. Visits to school by a student's friend/associates are not permitted except by special permission or for special events.

Classroom visitations are discouraged during the first/last three weeks of the school year and during testing sessions.

DRESS CODE

Please see our District Parent-Student Handbook.

HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Please check your child's book bag on a daily basis. Encourage your child to take responsibility for giving you informational items, community announcements, school schedules, and newsletters, which he/she may carry, home in his/her book bag. Parent/child communications will be improved through jointly exploring school work and school communications each day.

HOMEWORK

Please keep in mind as homework is assigned and completed that homework benefits student learning when it connects to, not replaces, direct instruction. It should be used for remediation, meaningful practice, and to expand concepts taught in the classroom.

The following specifics support positive, productive homework as a tool for learning:

- The "Ten Minute Rule" should be applied as a general rule for homework assignments; ten minutes multiplied by the grade level per night. (up to 10x1 for kindergarten, 10x1 for first grade, 10x5 for fifth grade, etc.) These minutes represent a total expectation from all teachers with which a child works but do not include independent reading. The time requirements and the frequency of homework will vary according to each student's abilities, grade level, and the subject matter; however, if a child is consistently devoting time beyond the "Ten Minute Rule", parents should contact the classroom teacher. Workload adjustments, time management improvements, and/or motivation strategies are examples of ways to address such issues.
- Projects assigned as homework should be included in the "Ten Minute Rule."
- Independent reading is encouraged on a routine basis, including over the weekend and during vacation periods.
- Once homework is assigned the teacher is responsible for appropriate follow through until the assignment is completed with feedback offered in a timely fashion.

Make Up Work:

- Make up work is determined by the teacher involved. Considerations include length of absence and nature of absence.
- When a student has been absent for three or more days, teachers will provide homework as appropriate given adequate time to prepare. A teacher might advise alternative assignments such as keeping a journal and assigning some reading when appropriate. Parents are asked to keep in mind that much of what happens in class (direct instruction, discussions, activities, informal assessing, group work, etc.) cannot be made up by sending paper/pencil work home.
- Upon return from an absence, students will submit make-up work in a timely fashion, generally within one to two days for every day absent.

A Note to Parents Regarding the Elementary Homework

During the course of the 2008-2009 school year, the District #204 elementary school principals conducted an in-depth study on the topic of homework in order to guarantee that the district was current with best practices.

Several interesting results were found.

They included:

- The focus on the purpose of homework should be student learning not compliance. Teachers know that certain learning skills require practice to perfect, and often homework is used for practice. Research confirms that mastering a skill requires focused practice (Marzano et. al, 2001.)
- Research does seem to verify that a small amount of homework may be good for learning, but too much homework may be bad for learning. Up to a point, homework appears positive, but past the optimal amount, achievement either remains flat or declines. Curiously, the research about the appropriate amount of homework for different grade levels is already consistent with an informal guideline that many teachers already practice – the "ten minute" rule (Cooper, 2007.)
- All homework can be used to check for understanding if we convince students not to be threatened by grades. Grades are not necessary for learning to take place. Grades on homework often get in the way of learning, demotivate students, and create power struggles between students and teachers and between students and parents (Guskey, 2003).
- The goal of assessment of learning should be to keep failure at a minimum and to maintain learner's confidence – the opposite occurs when homework is graded. The most important question to ask about grading homework is "What is the effect on future learning?" (Stiggins, 2007.) Priority must be given to tasks that do not cause students to give up.

- All homework should receive feedback. Moving from grading to feedback encourages student ownership of learning. Allowing students to take control of their learning makes learning personal (Guskey and Anderson, 2008.)
- As a result of these findings, the principals with input from the teachers revised the District #204 homework statement in order to confirm that reasonable time-limited homework, which provides feedback to our students, is still important to the learning process. Although homework will not be graded, the practice it provides is key to the learning process. Generally, most students will not receive good grades if they do not practice.

Homework Tips for Parents:

Facilitating the learning of your child is the primary focus of the District #204 elementary staff. As a result, we understand the importance of an on-going partnership with our parents and students as they attempt school work at home. The following guidelines and tips are offered to assist you and your child to be successful:

Parents are encouraged to

- Ask your child what they are studying in school.
- Ask your child to show you homework assignments.
- Assist your child in organizing homework materials.
- Help your child formulate a plan for completing homework.
- Provide an appropriate space for your child to do homework.

Parents may if they wish.....

- Help your child interpret assignment directions.
- Proof read your child's work, pointing out errors.
- Read aloud required reading to your child.
- Give practice quizzes to your child to help prepare for tests.
- Help your child brainstorm ideas for papers or projects.
- Praise your child for completing homework.

Parents should not.....

- Attempt to teach your child concepts or skills the child is unfamiliar with.
- Complete assignments for your child.
- Allow your child to sacrifice sleep to complete homework.

Contact the teacher if.....

- Your child refuses to do their assignment
 - Instructions are unclear
 - Your child can't seem to get organized to finish assignments
 - You can't provide the needed supplies or materials
 - Neither you nor your child understand the purpose of the assignments
- (Vatterot, 2009) (Pandu, 2005)

Book Fines

Students who lose or misuse textbooks or library books will be charged a fee, based upon the decreased life of the book. Reasonable wear is accepted, but fines or replacement costs will be imposed for excessive wear, damage, or lost books. A letter will be sent home with students when they have accrued book fines.

LOST AND FOUND

The school cannot be responsible for lost personal items. Please do not allow your child to bring valuable, expensive, or irreplaceable items to school. No personal items beyond clothing and school supplies may be brought to school without staff permission. We regret that each year our lost and found box has many valuable items, which are never retrieved by the proper owner. Help us avoid this problem by clearly labeling your child's clothing and other articles with his/her full name. Our lost and found is located in the Multipurpose Room where students eat lunch. Parents and children are encouraged to periodically look over the lost and found to reclaim missing items. Though staff members are happy to assist students find lost items whenever possible, maintaining personal items is the primary responsibility of students and parents.

Twice per year, parents will be informed the Lost and Found has been relocated to the front hallway. During this time, parents are invited in, during the school day for one week, to claim missing items. At the end of the week, remaining items will be donated to a local organization in need of clothing.

LUNCH/LUNCHROOM PROCEDURES

During lunchtime recess, students will be able to enjoy the playground except for days of inclement weather and/or when the temperature is below 5 degrees, including the wind-chill. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Students must wear snow pants and boots in order to play in the snow in the grassy areas. If students do not wear snow pants and boots they will be required to stay on the blacktop area or in the woodchip area. Students participate in 15 minutes of recess after eating lunch. The lunch session is 20 minutes long. Experience informs us that this is an appropriate and adequate amount of time for our students to socialize, play and eat during the middle of the day.

We expect students in the lunchroom to respect the rights and property of others. Good manners are essential. Please review the following lunchroom rules with your child:

1. Use proper table manners.
2. Walk in the lunchroom.
3. Maintain quiet voices.
4. Raise your hand and wait for help.
5. Never throw your food.
6. Properly discard your food and waste, clearing the tables and floor in your area.
7. Recycle or reuse lunch containers and any other recyclable materials.

MONEY

Any money sent to school for hot lunch, field trips, book orders, or other appropriate reasons must be put in a sealed envelope, marked with the student's name, purpose of the money and amount enclosed.

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Emergency Information

It is of the utmost importance that your emergency telephone numbers listed on the registration and health forms are current. As changes occur, please contact the office to update the information, as these will be the phone numbers that we will use if your child is injured or sick.

Fire, Emergency and Disaster Drills

Fire, emergency and severe weather drills are practiced routinely throughout the school year to familiarize the students with the alarm sound and procedures. Fire and tornado exit guidelines are posted in all school areas. Emergency drills and procedures will be practiced as deemed appropriate to insure the maximum safety of our students.

Playground Guidelines

Parents should be aware that the playground is not supervised before 8:50 a.m. or after school. **For safety reasons, no unauthorized children or adults are allowed on school playgrounds during school hours.** During lunch recess students will be able to enjoy the playground except for days of extreme weather. Please make sure your child is always dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Students will be going outside unless there is precipitation or the temperature is below 5 degrees—temp. or wind chill factor.

For: Emergency School Closings, Emergency Delayed Dismissal, Procedure for Delayed Dismissal, and the Medication Policy see our District Parent-Student Handbook.

SCHOOL CLIMATE / BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Public schools, to be effective, must give all students the opportunity to learn and all teachers the opportunity to teach. We believe in the development of self-discipline in each student. Parents, teachers and school officials are all partners in helping students acquire that self-discipline. At school, teachers are the first resource in fostering an orderly school atmosphere. Parents and students should become familiar with the discipline policy in the **District 204 Parent Student Handbook**.

We believe that the most successful schools have teams of educators who actively teach students how to be respectful, define behavioral expectations, monitor and follow up on student behavior and acknowledge appropriate behavior. Therefore, at Gwendolyn Brooks School we have implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) system. PBIS is a proactive system approach to preventing and responding to classroom and school discipline problems. Emphasis is directed toward developing and maintaining safe learning environments where teachers can teach and students can learn. The purpose of the PBIS approach is to provide schools with the capacity for systematic planning and problem solving when preventing and responding to problem behavior.

As part of our PBIS system Brooks holds all students to three expectations:

- 1. Be Respectful**
- 2. Be Responsible**
- 3. Be Safe**

This is primarily facilitated using CHAMPS classroom management and discipline plans in our classrooms. We also collectively recognize good behavior in the classroom and throughout the school and buses by awarding students CHAMP bucks and monthly Tiger Trait Awards.

Recognizing Positive Student Behavior

Students who choose to act in respectful, responsible, safe manner may receive a variety of positive recognition such as:

1. Verbal praise from his/her teacher.
2. Written commendation in the form of a certificate or postcard from the teacher to the parents.
3. Tangible reinforcement may be issued by staff members as spontaneous recognition in the form of CHAMP BUCKS. The reinforcement is used for a special monthly incentive throughout the year.

Classroom Behavior Expectations

Classroom behavior expectations are established by the teacher. Please watch for this information and review it with your child.

Student Discipline

Please see our District Parent-Student Handbook.

THREATS/BULLYING/INTIMIDATION AND SAFE SCHOOLS

Please see our District Parent-Student Handbook.

TRANSPORTATION

Private Vehicle Transportation

If your child will not be riding the bus on any particular day, please send a note stating such and who will be responsible for picking him/her up from school. Students who do not have a note will be asked to ride the bus home. If your child is eligible for bus service

but you will be driving him/her to school every day, please write a note, which states that you will be providing transportation every day. **Students may ride only their assigned buses.** For bus transportation to and from permanent, in-home daycare providers, please call the school or refer to the district handbook.

Due to bus arrival times in the afternoon, please be reminded that cars are not permitted in the front parking lot after 3:10 pm.

Please avoid calling the school after 2:00 p.m. to change transportation arrangements previously arranged with your child(ren). **Last minute transportation changes can lead to confusion and are a serious safety concern.**

Visitors

All visitors must enter the school at **Door 1** and go to the main office. We ask for your cooperation in presenting your valid Illinois ID or Driver's License when entering the school. Visitors' IDs will be returned when they leave the building. The school staff will physically hold all visitors' IDs, so in an emergency, first responders can quickly know who is in the building. If you are attending a school event during school hours, please arrive a few minutes early in order to allow for time to have your ID scanned and an ID badge printed.

Also, if your children arrive at school after 9:05 a.m., you must ring the bell at **Door 1** for admittance, and accompany your child into the main office to be signed in. Please note that this precaution will help to insure the safety of our students. All visitors are required to make prior arrangements before visiting a teacher and/or classroom. It is important that the classroom instruction not be interrupted for individual concerns. (See Visitation/Conferences)

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR WEAPONS

Please see our District Parent-Student Handbook.