

# HANCOCK CENTRAL SCHOOL

## HANDBOOK 2024 - 2025



Handbook policies and protocols apply to all students unless otherwise specified.

**Hancock Central School**  
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Paraprofessional, After School Coordinator  
Speech and Language Pathologist  
School Nurse  
School Psychologist  
Paraprofessional  
Special Education Teacher  
Early Childhood Teacher  
Physical Education and Technology  
Music Teacher  
Physical Therapist  
Occupational Therapist  
Paraprofessional  
RTI Specialist, Art Teacher, Food Transportation  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher  
Principal  
5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Superintendent/Special Education Director  
Custodian  
School Adjustment Counselor  
Secretary  
3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade Teacher  
Paraprofessional

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August, 2024

Dear Families,

Welcome to another exciting school year at Hancock School! As we embark on this journey, I want to emphasize our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where every child can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Our handbook is designed to help guide our school community through the policies, procedures, and expectations that ensure a positive and productive learning experience for all. Whether you're a new member of our school or a returning family, please review this handbook carefully. It contains important information about our school's operations, behavioral expectations, and the resources available to support your child's success.

As we focus on building a culture of kindness, respect, and responsibility, let's work together to make this school year one of growth and achievement. We believe in the potential of every student, and we are dedicated to providing the support and encouragement each needs to reach their goals.

Thank you for being a vital part of our school community. Together, we will continue to make Hancock a place where every student feels valued and empowered to learn.

Wishing you all a fantastic school year!

Principal Merselis

### **Mission Statement**

Hancock Elementary School creates a positive, safe, and rigorous educational setting that fosters a student-centered learning environment based on mutual respect. To prepare our students for an ever-changing world, we believe education is the shared responsibility of the student, home, school, and community.

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## Code of Conduct

The Hancock School is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and school personnel may deliver quality educational services without disruption or interference. Responsible behavior by students, teachers, other school personnel, parents, and other visitors is essential to achieving this goal.

Unless otherwise indicated, this Code applies to all students, school personnel, parents, and other visitors when on school property or attending a school function.

### STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The school is committed to safeguarding the rights given to all students under state and federal law. In addition, to promote a safe, healthy, orderly, and civil school environment, all school students have the right to:

1. Take part in all school activities on an equal basis regardless of race, color, sex, gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or handicap.
2. Present their version of the relevant events to school personnel authorized to impose a disciplinary action in connection with the imposition of the consequences.
3. Access school rules and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from school personnel.

All school students have the responsibility to:

1. Contribute to maintaining a safe and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning and to show respect to other persons and property.
2. Be familiar with, and abide by, all school policies, rules and regulations dealing with student conduct.
3. Attend school every day unless they are legally excused and be in class, on time, and prepared to learn.
4. Work to the best of their ability in all academic and extracurricular pursuits and strive toward their highest level of achievement possible.
5. React to directions given by teachers, administrators, and other school personnel in a respectful and positive manner.
6. Work to develop mechanisms to control their anger.
7. Ask questions when they do not understand.
8. Seek help in solving problems that might lead to discipline.
9. Dress appropriately for school and school functions.
10. Accept responsibility for their actions.
11. Conduct themselves as representatives of the school when participating in or attending school-sponsored extracurricular events and to hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct, demeanor, and sportsmanship.

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## ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

### *Parents*

All parents are expected to recognize that the education of their child(ren) is a joint responsibility of the parents and the school community.

All parents have the responsibility to:

1. Send their child(ren) to school ready to participate and learn.
2. Ensure their child(ren) attend school regularly, on time, and all absences are excused.
3. Insist their children be dressed and groomed in a manner consistent with the student dress code.
4. Help their children understand that in a democratic society, appropriate rules are required to maintain a safe and orderly environment.
5. Be courteous in speech and actions and refrain from the use of profanity.
6. Refrain from use of physical contact or force with school personnel or students.
7. Know and follow school rules and help their children understand them.
8. Convey to their children a supportive attitude toward education and the school.
9. Build good relationships with teachers, other parents, and their children's friends.
10. Help their children deal effectively with peer pressure.
11. Inform school officials of changes in the home situation that may affect student conduct or performance.
12. Provide a place for study and ensure homework assignments are completed.
13. Review the section on bullying with their child(ren).

### *Teachers*

All school teachers are expected to maintain a climate of mutual respect and dignity which will strengthen students' self-concept and promote confidence to learn.

All teachers have the responsibility to:

1. Be prepared to teach.
2. Demonstrate interest in teaching and concern for student achievement.
3. Know and follow school policies and rules, and enforce them in a fair and consistent manner.
4. Communicate to students and parents, preferably in writing
  1. Course objectives and requirements
  2. Marking/grading procedures
  3. Assignment deadlines
  4. Expectations for students
  5. Classroom discipline plan
5. Communicate proactively with students, parents, and other teachers concerning growth, achievement, and behavior.
6. Be courteous in speech and actions and refrain from use of profanity.

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7. Refrain from use of physical contact or force with school personnel or students.
8. Respect student privacy at all times.

### ***Student Adjustment Counselor***

The school adjustment counselor is responsible to:

1. Assist students in coping with peer pressure and emerging personal, social, and emotional problems.
2. Initiate teacher/student/counselor conferences and parent/teacher/student/counselor conferences, as necessary, as a way to prevent and resolve problems.
3. Provide building wide instruction on conflict resolution, anger management, bullying, diversity, and other student programs that encourage civility, safety, and impulse control.
4. Encourage students to benefit from the curriculum, extracurricular, and community programs.

### ***Principal***

The principal is responsible to:

1. Promote a safe, orderly and stimulating school environment, supporting active teaching and learning.
2. Ensure that students and staff have the opportunity to communicate regularly with the principal and approach the principal for redress of grievances.
3. Evaluate on a regular basis all instructional programs.
4. Support the development of, and student participation in, appropriate school and community activities.
5. Be responsible for enforcing the Code of Conduct and ensuring that all cases are resolved promptly and fairly.

### ***Superintendent***

The superintendent is expected to promote a safe, orderly, and stimulating school environment, supporting active teaching and learning.

The Superintendent is responsible to:

1. Review with school administrators the policies of the Hancock School and state and federal laws relating to school operations and management.
2. Inform Hancock School about educational trends relating to student discipline.
3. Work to create instructional programs that minimize problems of misconduct and are sensitive to student and teacher needs.
4. Work with school administrators in enforcing the Code of Conduct and ensuring that all cases are resolved promptly and fairly.

### ***Hancock School Committee***

The Hancock School Committee is responsible to:

1. Collaborate with student, teacher, administrator, and parent organizations, school safety personnel and other school personnel to develop a Code of Conduct that clearly defines expectations for the conduct of students, school personnel, and visitors on school property and at school functions.
2. Adopt and review at least annually the school's Code of Conduct to evaluate the Code's effectiveness and the fairness and consistency of its implementation.
3. Lead by example by conducting school committee meetings in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner.

### **STUDENT DRESS CODE**

All students are expected to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to dress appropriately for school and school functions. Students and their parents have the primary responsibility for acceptable student dress and appearance. Teachers and all other school personnel should exemplify and reinforce acceptable student dress and help students develop an understanding of appropriate appearance in the school setting. A student's dress shall:

1. Be safe, appropriate, and not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.
2. Recognize that brief garments such as gym shorts, tube tops, net tops, halter- tops, bare midriffs, plunging necklines (front and/or back), and see-through garments are not appropriate.
3. Ensure that underwear is completely covered with outer clothing.
4. Include footwear at all times. Footwear that is a safety hazard is not acceptable.
5. Not include items that are vulgar, obscene, and libelous or denigrate others on account of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
6. Not promote and/or endorse the use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, and/or encourage other illegal or violent activities.

The principal or his or her designee shall be responsible for informing all students and their parents of the student dress code at the beginning of the school year and any revisions to the dress code made during the school year.

Students who violate the student dress code shall be required to modify their appearance by covering or removing the offending item and, if necessary or practical, replacing it with an acceptable item.

### **PROHIBITED STUDENT CONDUCT**

The Hancock School expects all students to conduct themselves in an appropriate and civil manner, with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school personnel, and for the care of school facilities and equipment.



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The Hancock School recognizes the need to make its expectations for student conduct specific and clear. Students who will not accept responsibility for their own behavior may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from school, when they:

A. Engage in conduct that is disorderly. Examples of disorderly conduct include but are not limited to:

1. Running in hallways.
2. Making unreasonable noise.
3. Using language or gestures that are profane, lewd, vulgar, or abusive.
4. Engaging in any willful act which disrupts the normal operation of the school community.
5. Computer/electronic communications misuse, including any unauthorized use of computers, software, or internet/intranet account; accessing inappropriate websites; or any other violation of the school's acceptable use policy.

B. Engage in conduct that is insubordinate. Examples of insubordinate conduct include:

1. Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators, or other school employees in charge of students or otherwise demonstrating disrespect.
2. Lateness or, missing or leaving school without permission
3. Skipping classes.
4. Rude or disrespectful behavior.

C. Engage in conduct that is disruptive. Examples of disruptive conduct include:

1. Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators, or other school employees in charge of students or otherwise demonstrating disrespect.
2. Interfering with the educational process of children.

D. Engage in conduct that is violent. Examples of violent conduct include:

1. Committing an act of violence, or attempting to do so, (such as hitting, kicking, punching, and scratching) upon another student, teacher, administrator, or other school employee.
2. Possessing a weapon.
3. Displaying what appears to be a weapon.
4. Threatening to use any weapon.
5. Intentionally damaging or destroying the personal property of a student, teacher, administrator, other school employee, or any person lawfully on school property, including graffiti or arson.
6. Intentionally damaging or destroying school or school property.

E. Engage in bullying.

Bullying is any unwelcome written or verbal expressions, physical acts, or gestures directed at a student or another member of the school community with the intent to intimidate, harass, frighten, ridicule, humiliate, or cause physical or emotional harm to that person. It is behavior that is repeated, intentional, and creates an imbalance of power. Cyber-bullying is bullying by means

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including electronic mails, cellular phones, instant messages, text messages or websites. Examples of bullying include:

1. Teasing
2. Exclusion
3. Taunting (verbal or physical intimidation)
4. Cyber-bullying
5. Pushing, kicking, hitting, or spitting
6. Non-verbal gestures
7. Taking or damaging another person's personal property

F. Engage in any conduct that endangers the safety, morals, health, or welfare of others. Examples of such conduct include:

1. Lying to school personnel.
2. Stealing the property of others.
3. Defamation, which includes making false statements or representations about an individual that harm the reputation of the person(s) by demeaning them.
4. Discrimination, which includes the use of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability as a basis for treating another in a negative manner.
5. Harassment, which includes a sufficiently severe action or a persistent, pervasive pattern of actions or statements directed at an identifiable individual or group which are intended to be or which a reasonable person would perceive as ridiculing or demeaning.
6. Intimidation, which includes engaging in actions or statements, that put a reasonable individual in fear of bodily harm.
7. Hazing, which includes any intentional or reckless act directed against another for the purpose of initiation into, affiliating with, or maintaining membership in any school sponsored activity, organization, club or team.
8. Selling, using, or possessing obscene material.
9. Using vulgar or abusive language, cursing or swearing.
10. Using or possessing tobacco or nicotine.
11. Possessing, consuming, selling, distributing, or exchanging alcoholic beverages, or illegal substances, or being under the influence of either.
12. Inappropriately using or sharing prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
13. Gambling.
14. Indecent exposure, that is, exposure to sight of the private parts of the body in a lewd or indecent manner.
15. Initiating a report warning of fire or other catastrophe without valid cause, misuse of 911, or discharging a fire extinguisher.

G. Engage in misconduct while on a school bus.

It is crucial for students to behave appropriately while riding on district buses to ensure their safety and that of other passengers and to avoid distracting the bus driver. Students are required to

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conduct themselves on the bus in a manner consistent with established standards for classroom behavior. Excessive noise, pushing, shoving, and fighting will not be tolerated.

1. Stay in seat.
2. Follow driver's structure for seating assignments.
3. Do not eat or litter on the bus.
4. Follow driver's instructions.
5. Use acceptable language.

H. Engage in any form of academic misconduct.

1. Plagiarism
2. Cheating
3. Copying
4. Altering records.
5. Assisting another student in any of the above actions.

### ***Reporting Violations***

All students are expected to promptly report violations of the Code of Conduct to a teacher, guidance counselor, the building principal, or his or her designee. All school staff that are authorized to impose disciplinary sanctions are expected to do so in a prompt, fair, and lawful manner.

Any weapon, alcohol, or illegal substance found shall be confiscated immediately, if possible, followed by immediate notification to the parent of the student involved and the appropriate disciplinary sanction, if warranted, which may include permanent suspension and referral for prosecution.

The principal or his or her designee must notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency of those Code violations that constitute a crime and substantially affect the order or security of a school as soon as practical. The notification may be made by telephone, followed by a letter. The notification must identify the student and explain the conduct.

School personnel who interact with students are expected to use disciplinary action only when necessary and to place emphasis on the student's ability to grow in self-discipline. Disciplinary action, when necessary, will be firm, fair, and consistent so as to be the most effective in changing student behavior. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel will consider the following:

- The student's age.
- The nature of the offense and the circumstances that led to the offense.
- The student's prior disciplinary record.
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline.
- Information from parents, teachers, and/or others, as appropriate.
- Other extenuating circumstances.

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As a general rule, discipline will be progressive. This means that a student's first violation will usually merit a lighter consequence than subsequent violations. A student identified as having a disability shall not be disciplined for behavior related to his/her disability.

## **BULLYING**

Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, was signed into law on May 3, 2010 and took effect immediately. The law requires each school district, charter school, non-public school, approved day or residential school, and collaborative school to develop and implement a plan to address bullying and intervention. The statute directs the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to promulgate regulations addressing a Principal's duties under one of the ten required elements of the bullying and intervention plan, namely, notification to parents or guardians of the victim and the perpetrator of bullying or retaliation and the action taken to prevent further bullying, and notification to law enforcement of bullying or retaliation, when the perpetrator's conduct also may result in criminal charges. The law further provides that the regulations must be promulgated by September 30, 2010. Definition of Bullying: Pursuant to M.G.L. C71, S 370, means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or damage to his or her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying shall include cyber bullying. Amendments were made to the Massachusetts anti-bullying law, which became effective July 1, 2013. The amendments extend protections to students who are bullied by a member of the school staff. As defined in M.G.L. C71, S370, as amended, a member of the school staff includes, but is not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or a paraprofessional. A member of the school staff may be named the "aggressor" or "perpetrator" in a bullying report. Bullying is a major distraction from learning. Continued bullying may be defined as harassment which has severe consequences. Fear generated from bullying can lead to chronic absenteeism, truancy or even dropping out of school. Bystanders feel both guilty and helpless for not standing up to the bully. As a rule, bullying behavior starts in elementary school and peaks in the middle school years. However, it attracts more attention from adults when it appears in high school. There the students are older and physically larger and the behavior is recognized as being less tolerable and more inappropriate. Most bullying by students starts out verbally, teasing and put-downs, and may become progressively worse and assume physical dimensions. Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. The Hancock School District will endeavor to maintain a learning and working environment free of bullying. Bullying is defined as the act of one or more individuals intimidating one or more persons through verbal, physical, mental, or written interactions. Perpetrators of bullying can be both students and adults.

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds and any school-sponsored event or activity, whether on or off campus. Bullying is prohibited through the use of district computers while on or off campus and the use of personal digital devices either on campus or off- campus in a manner that causes a

disruption on school grounds. Retaliation against students or school personnel who reported the incident(s) of bullying is prohibited.

This policy can be found on the District website at [www.hancockschool.org](http://www.hancockschool.org)

## **DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES AND PROCEDURES**

The Hancock Elementary School Principal and Special Education Director meet weekly to review discipline data of all students, including special populations and high needs students. The team may consist of special education liaison, school adjustment counselor, teachers, nurse, and para-professionals.

Students who are found to have violated the school’s Code of Conduct may be subject to the following consequences, either alone or in combination. The school personnel identified after each penalty are authorized to impose that consequence, consistent with the student’s right to due process.

1. Oral warning – any member of the school staff.
2. Written warning – bus drivers, hall and lunch monitors, coaches, guidance counselors, teachers, principal, and superintendent.
3. Written notification to parent – bus driver, hall and lunch monitors, coaches, guidance counselors, teachers, principal, superintendent.
4. Detention – teachers, principal, superintendent.
5. Suspension from transportation – principal, superintendent.
6. Suspension from athletic participation – coaches, principal, superintendent.
7. Suspension from social or extracurricular activities – activity director, principal, superintendent.
8. Suspension of other privileges – principal, superintendent.
9. In-school suspension – principal, superintendent.
10. Removal from classroom – teachers, principal.
11. Short-term (five days or less) suspension from school – principal, superintendent.
12. Long-term (more than five days) suspension from school – principal, superintendent.
13. Permanent suspension from school – superintendent.

### ***Procedures***

The school personnel authorized to impose a consequence must inform the student of the alleged misconduct and must investigate, to the extent necessary, the facts surrounding the alleged misconduct. All students will have an opportunity to present their version of the facts to the school personnel imposing the disciplinary consequence. The student and the student’s parent will be provided with a reasonable opportunity for an informal conference with the building principal, the principal’s designee, or teacher to discuss the conduct and the consequence involved.

1. Detention will be imposed as a consequence only after the student’s parent has been notified, preferably by phone, to confirm that there is no parental objection to the detention and the student has appropriate transportation home.

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2. If a student does not conduct himself/herself properly on a bus, the bus driver is expected to bring such misconduct to the building principal's attention through a bus referral. Students who become a serious disciplinary problem may have their riding privileges suspended by the building principal or the superintendent.
3. Building principal and the superintendent are authorized to place students in "in-school suspension." The in-school suspension supervisor will be a teacher or para-professional.
4. Suspension from school is a severe penalty, which may be imposed upon students who are insubordinate, disorderly, violent, or significantly disruptive, or whose conduct otherwise endangers the safety, morals, health, or welfare of others. Hancock Elementary School retains its authority to suspend students, but places primary responsibility for the suspension of students with the principal. Please see below for specifics regarding suspension from school.

- When the superintendent or principal (referred to as the "suspending authority") determines that a suspension for five days or less is warranted, they will immediately notify the student orally. The suspending authority must provide an explanation of the basis for the proposed suspension. The suspending authority must also notify the student's parents in writing that the student may be suspended from school. Whenever possible, notice should also be provided by telephone.
- When the superintendent or building principal determines that a suspension for more than five days may be warranted, reasonable notice will be provided to the student and the student's parents of their right to a fair hearing. The superintendent shall personally hear and determine the procedure. A record of the hearing shall be maintained.

An appeal of the superintendent's decision may be made to the Hancock School Committee that will make its decision based solely upon the record before it. All appeals to the Hancock School Committee must be in writing and submitted to the school clerk within 10 business days of the date of the superintendent's decision. Hancock School Committee may adopt in whole or in part the decision of the superintendent. Final decisions of the Hancock School Committee may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education within 30 days of the decision.

### ***Minimum Periods of Suspension***

NOTE: The federal Gun-free Schools Act of 1994 (20 USC §8921) requires all states that receive funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to have a law that requires schools to suspend students who bring weapons to school for a minimum of one calendar year. Section 3214(3)(d) of the Education Law has been amended to comply with the federal law. The federal law defines "weapon" somewhat narrowly. (See 18 USC §914.)

Any student\* found guilty of bringing a weapon onto school property will be subject to suspension from school for at least one calendar year. Before being suspended, the student will have an opportunity for a hearing. The superintendent has the authority to modify the one-year suspension on a case-by-case basis. In deciding whether to modify the penalty, the superintendent may consider the following:

1. The student's age.

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2. The student’s grade in school.
3. The student’s prior disciplinary record.
4. The superintendent’s belief that other forms of discipline may be more effective.
5. Input from parents, teachers and/or others.
6. Other extenuating circumstances.

\* A student with a disability may be suspended only in accordance with the requirements of state and federal law.

The SAVE legislation requires that a violent student be subject to a minimum period of suspension under the school’s Code of Conduct (§3214(b)(2) and §2801(2)(m)). Schools are free to choose any minimum period so long as it is reasonable. The sample Code adopts a five-day minimum period to avoid the more detailed procedures that must accompany a suspension of more than five days.

## **DUE PROCESS FOR SUSPENSIONS**

### ***Notice of Proposed Suspension***

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ or an in-school suspension as defined by 603 CMR 53.02(6), the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out-of-school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing. Notice shall set forth in plain language:

1. the disciplinary offense;
2. the basis for the charge;
3. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student’s suspension;
4. the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student’s explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
5. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
6. the right of the student and student’s parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal sent written notice and documented at least two attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations.

All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

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***General Requirements Prior To Suspension Under M.G.L. Chapter 71, §37H<sup>3/4</sup>***

A student may not be suspended under M.G.L. Chapter 71, §37H<sup>3/4</sup>, unless one or more of the following apply:

- A. Alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents.
- B. There are documented specific reasons why alternative remedies are unsuitable or counterproductive.
- C. The situation is such that the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school.

***Short-Term Suspensions: Hearing and Principal Determination***

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

Principal Hearing. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts. A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal will provide notification in writing of his/her determination in the form of an update to the student and parent/guardian, and provide reasons for the determination. If the student is suspended, the principal shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and



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parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

### ***Long-Term Suspensions: Hearing and Principal Determination***

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

1. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
2. the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense;
3. the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; and
4. the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
5. the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.

Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

1. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
2. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal,
3. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
4. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during removal, and the contact information of a school member who can provided more detailed information.

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5. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or his/her designee (only if a long-term suspension has been imposed) within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

### ***Appeal of Long-Term Suspension***

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be final.

### ***Emergency Removal***

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts to the order of the school and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal.

- During the emergency, removal the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason for the emergency removal. The principal shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable, within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension

of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day. The decision shall meet all of the due process requirements of a principal's determination in a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable.

A principal may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation and a copy of the School-Wide Education Service Plan for students who are expelled or suspended for more than 10 consecutive days.

***In-School Suspension Under 603 CMR 53:02(6) & CMR 53.10***

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year.

A Principal may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

1. The principal shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.
2. On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.
3. The principal shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

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*Suspension or Expulsion for Disciplinary Offenses Under M.G.L. 71 §§37H and 37H½*

The due process notification and hearing requirements in the preceding sections do not apply to the following disciplinary offenses:

1. Possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or assault of staff

A student may be subject to expulsion if found in possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or the student assaults a member of educational staff, and the principal determines the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The Principal shall notify the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the opportunity for a hearing, and the right to have representation at the hearing, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. After said hearing, a principal may, in his/her discretion, decide to levy a suspension rather than expulsion. A student expelled for such an infraction shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the Superintendent of his/her appeal. The student has the right to counsel at the hearing before the Superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student was guilty of the alleged offense.

2. Felony complaint or issuance of felony delinquency complaint

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the Principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the Principal if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The Principal shall notify the student in writing of the charges, the reasons for the suspension (prior to such suspension taking effect), and the right to appeal. The Principal will also provide the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the process for appealing the suspension to the Superintendent. The request for appeal must be made in writing within five (5) calendar days. The hearing shall be held within three (3) days of the request. The suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing before the Superintendent. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

3. Felony conviction or adjudication/admission in court of guilt for a felony or felony delinquency

The Principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the Principal determines that the student's

continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for the proposed expulsion. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent, as well as the appeal process. The expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the Superintendent.

The student shall notify the Superintendent in writing of his/her request for an appeal the decision no later than five (5) calendar days following the date of the expulsion. The Superintendent hearing shall be held with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) within three (3) calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and shall have the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

### ***Alternative Instruction***

Students removed from class due to a suspension must be provided with alternative instruction.

#### **A. Educational Services and Academic Progress During Suspensions and Expulsion**

Students removed from class due to a suspension must be provided with alternative instruction. Any student who is serving an in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion shall have the opportunity to earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the class-room. The principal shall inform the student and parent of such opportunity in writing when such suspension or expulsion is imposed.

Any student expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through a school-wide education service plan. This plan will be developed by the principal and shall describe the services that the school district will make available to students who are expelled or suspended for ten (10) or more consecutive days. The plan will include the process for notifying such students and their parents of the services and arranging the services.

### **DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) sets forth the following procedures with respect to the suspension of students with special needs and protections for those children not yet eligible for special education and related services: School personnel may order a change in

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placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative setting, another setting, or suspension, for not more than ten (10) school days (to the extent such alternatives would be applied to children without disabilities).

If a child with disabilities carries a weapon to school or to a school function, knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function, school personnel may order a change in placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for the same amount of time that a child without a disability would be subject to discipline, but not for more than forty-five 45 days. When a child with a disability or suspected disability has been suspended or placed in an alternative setting for ten (10) days (cumulative), the Individual Education Plan team will be convened to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment, including a Manifestation Determination, and will develop a Behavioral Intervention Plan that will be accepted by the IEP team. If the child has an existing Behavioral Intervention Plan, the IEP team will review the plan and modify if necessary. If an alternative educational setting is warranted, the placement will be determined by the IEP team. The placement will be selected so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general curriculum in another setting and will ensure the provision of those services and modifications described in a child's IEP that will enable the child to meet the goals set forth in the IEP.

A hearing officer may order a change of placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if:

1. The hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others;
2. The behavior is a manifestation of the disability, except when the student has been placed in an interim alternative educational setting, the student returns to the original placement unless the parents and district agree otherwise; and
3. The parent chooses to appeal or the school district requests a hearing because it believes that maintaining the student's current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, the student remains in the disciplinary placement, if any, until the decision of the hearing officer or the end of the time period for the disciplinary action, whichever comes first, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behaviors as set forth in this handbook. Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws, known as 603 CMR 28.00 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 20 U.S.C. Section 1400 and 34 CFR Section 300, require that additional provisions be made for students who have been found by an evaluation team to have a disability and whose program is described in an Individualized Educational Program (I.E.P.) or a 504 Accommodation Plan. The following additional requirements apply to the disciplining of students with special needs and students with 504 Accommodation Plans:

1. Any modifications of the discipline code will be identified in the student's IEP or 504 Accommodations Plan.

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2. The Principal (or designee) will notify the Director of Pupil Personnel Services of the suspendable offense of a student with a disability and a record will be kept of such notices.
3. When it is known that the suspension(s) of a student with a disability will accumulate beyond 10 days in a school year, a review of the IEP/Accommodation Plan will be held to determine the appropriateness of the student's placement or program. The team will make a finding as to the relationship between the student's misconduct and:
  - Develop or review a functional behavior assessment
  - Determine if the misconduct is a manifestation of the disability
  - Consider a modified program or alternate placement for the student
  - Consider an amendment to provide for the delivery of services during the suspension and any needed modification of the IEP/504 Accommodation Plan.

In addition, the Department of Education will be notified when required by law, and the procedures promulgated by the Department of Education for requesting the approval of the alternative plan will be followed. Parents will be notified with written notice of their rights under special education regulations.

A. Procedural requirements applied to students not yet determined to be eligible for special education

1. If, prior to the disciplinary action, a district had knowledge that the student may be a student with a disability, then the district makes all protections available to the student until and unless the student is subsequently determined not to be eligible. The district may be considered to have prior knowledge if:
  - a. The parent had expressed concern in writing; or
  - b. The parent had requested an evaluation; or
  - c. District staff had expressed directly to the special education director or other supervisory personnel specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student.
2. The district may not be considered to have had prior knowledge if the parent has not consented to evaluation of the student or has refused special education services, or if an evaluation of the student has resulted in a determination of ineligibility.
3. If the district had no reason to consider the student disabled, and the parent requests an evaluation subsequent to the disciplinary action, the district must have procedures consistent with federal requirements to conduct an expedited evaluation to determine eligibility.
4. If the student is found eligible, then he/she receives all procedural protections subsequent to the finding of eligibility.

Hancock Elementary School recognizes that it may be necessary to suspend, remove or otherwise discipline students with disabilities to address disruptive or problem behavior.

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Hancock Elementary School also recognizes that students with disabilities enjoy certain procedural protections whenever school authorities intend to impose discipline upon them. Hancock Elementary School is committed to ensuring that the procedures followed for suspending, removing or otherwise disciplining students with disabilities are consistent with the procedural safeguards required by applicable laws and regulations. This Code of Conduct affords students with disabilities subject to disciplinary action no greater or lesser rights than those expressly afforded by applicable federal and state law and regulations.

The Director of Special Education will be notified when it is necessary to suspend, remove, or otherwise discipline students with disabilities to address disruptive or problem behavior.

### **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

Corporal punishment is any act of physical force upon a student for the purpose of punishing that student. Corporal punishment of any student by any school employee is strictly forbidden.

The school will file all complaints about the use of corporal punishment with the Commissioner of Education in accordance with the Commissioner's regulations.

### **PHYSICAL RESTRAINT**

The use of physical restraint is permitted in limited circumstances and must only be used as outlined in the relevant regulations by those who have received the legally required trainings. However, in situations where alternative procedures and methods that do not involve the use of physical force cannot reasonably be used, reasonable physical force may be used as is necessary to protect pupils and other persons from an assault by a pupil.

### **STUDENT SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS**

The Hancock Central School is committed to ensuring an atmosphere on school property and at school functions that is safe and orderly. To achieve this kind of environment, any school official authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty on a student may question a student about an alleged violation or law or the school Code of Conduct. Students are not entitled to any sort of "Miranda"-type warning before being questioned by school officials, nor are school officials required to contact a student's parent before questioning the student. However, school officials will tell all students why they are being questioned.

In addition, Hancock Central School authorizes the superintendent, building principal, and the school nurse to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the school Code of Conduct.

An authorized school official may conduct a search of a student's belongings that is minimally intrusive, such as touching the outside of a book bag, without reasonable suspicion, so long as the school official has a legitimate reason for the very limited search.



## **STUDENT LOCKERS, DESKS AND OTHER SCHOOL STORAGE PLACES**

Students have no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to student lockers, desks and other school storage places. School officials retain complete control over them. This means that student lockers, desks and other school storage places may be subject to search at any time by school officials, without prior notice to students and without their consent.

## **POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS OF STUDENTS**

School officials are committed to cooperating with the police officials and other law enforcement authorities to maintain a safe school environment. Police officials, however, have limited authority to interview or search students in schools or at school functions, or to use school facilities in connection with police work. Police officials may enter school property or a school function to question or search a student or to conduct a formal investigation involving students only if they have:

1. A search or an arrest warrant; or
2. Probable cause to believe a crime has been committed on school property or at a school function; or
3. Been invited by school officials.

Before police officials are permitted to question or search any student, the building principal or his or her designee shall first try to notify the student's parents to give the parent the opportunity to be present during the police questioning or search. If the student's parent cannot be contacted prior to the police questioning or search, the questioning or search shall not be conducted. The principal or designee will also be present during any police questioning or search of a student on school property or at a school function. Students who are questioned by police officials on school property or at a school function will be afforded the same rights they have outside the school. This means:

1. They must be informed of their legal rights.
2. They may remain silent if they so desire.
3. They may request the presence of an attorney.

## **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS**

Consistent with the school's commitment to keep students safe from harm and the obligation of school officials to report to child protective services when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been abused or maltreated, the school will cooperate with local child protective services workers who wish to conduct interviews of students on school property relating to allegations of suspected child abuse, and/or neglect, or custody investigations.

All requests by child protective services to interview a student on school property shall be made directly to the building principal or his or her designee.

## **VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL**

Hancock Central School encourages parents and other school citizens to visit the classrooms to observe the work of students, teachers, and other staff. Since schools are a place of work and learning, however, certain limits must be set for such visits. The building principal is responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. For these reasons, the following rules apply to visitors to the school:

1. All visitors to the school must report to the office of the principal upon arrival at the school. There, they will be required to sign the visitor's register and will be issued a visitor's identification badge, which must be worn at all times while in the school or on school grounds. The visitor must return the identification badge to the principal's office before leaving the building. Visitors attending school functions that are open to the public, such as parent-teacher organization meetings or public gatherings, are not required to register.
2. Parents or citizens who wish to observe a classroom while school is in session are required to arrange such visits in advance with the classroom teacher(s), so that class disruption is kept to a minimum.
3. Teachers are expected not to take class time to discuss individual matters with visitors.
4. Any unauthorized person on school property will be reported to the principal.
5. Unauthorized persons will be asked to leave. The police may be called if the situation warrants. If someone is behaving inappropriately, the principal has the right to ask him or her to leave.
6. All visitors are expected to abide by the rules for public conduct on school property contained in this Code of Conduct.

## **PUBLIC CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

The school is committed to providing an orderly, respectful environment that is conducive to learning. To create and maintain this kind of environment, it is necessary to regulate public conduct on school property and at school functions. For purposes of this section of the Code, "public" shall mean all persons when on school property or attending a school function including students, teachers and school personnel. The restrictions on public conduct are not intended to limit freedom of speech or peaceful assembly. All persons on school property or attending a school function shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY**

The School Committee recognizes that parents/guardians may wish to be in close contact with their children during the school day, and therefore, students may be provided with an electronic signaling device such as a cell phone. Through the use of cell phones families can communicate better and students and staff can feel a greater sense of security while at school.

The following procedures are in place:

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1. Students are permitted to be in possession of electronic signaling devices while attending school and school sponsored activities.
2. Students shall have the electronic signaling devices turned off at all times during school hours, which includes recess and lunch. The only time that students may have the devices turned on or used is before school and after school. This policy also pertains to text-messaging and listening to music. Signaling devices should be kept in a locked locker or backpack. They should not be visible.
3. Should a student be found with an electronic signaling device, the device shall be confiscated and given to an administrator. The student may pick up the device at the end of the day in the principal's office. A second infraction shall result in the signaling device being confiscated and the parent/guardian will be required to meet with the principal in order to retrieve the device. A third infraction shall result in the student being denied consent to have a signaling device in school until the end of the semester.

If a student needs to use a telephone, he/she is advised to come to the office and ask permission to use the school phone or obtain permission from the classroom teacher.

The school is not responsible for stolen or lost electronic devices; their security is the sole responsibility of the student. The school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their devices stolen while traveling to and from school or on field trips.

Cell phones are not permitted during school hours. They may be stored in backpacks or lockers. Students found using a cell phone will have the phone taken from them. They may pick it up at the end of the day. For a second offense, the cell phone will be returned to a parent/guardian. If a third offense occurs the phone will not be allowed in school.

Staff may carry cell phones, but must have them silenced during teaching time. They may use them during preps, breaks, and recess.

Electronic devices include but are not limited to cell phones, IPODs, pagers, and handheld game devices.

## **ATTENDANCE AND AFTER SCHOOL FUNCTIONS**

Students who do not attend school during the day may not attend any school function that evening.

## **DISRUPTIVE STUDENT/ADULT POLICY**

The Principal has the right to ask that a student be removed or an adult to leave the school property if the Principal feels that person is a significant disruption to the educational environment. If necessary, the police will be called.

## **DISSEMINATION AND REVIEW**

### **A. Dissemination of Code of Conduct**

Hancock Central School will work to ensure that the community is aware of the Code of Conduct by providing access to the document electronically and hard copies for those families who request one.

1. Providing copies of a summary of the Code to all students in Grades PK – 6 at the beginning of each school year. Homeroom teachers will review with students.
2. Providing all current teachers and other staff members with a copy of the Code for their binders and a copy of any amendments to the Code as soon as practicable after adoption.
3. Providing all new employees with a copy of the current Code of Conduct when they are hired.
4. The Hancock School Committee will review this Code of Conduct and update it as necessary. In conducting the review, Hancock School Committee will consider how effective the Code’s provisions have been and whether the Code has been applied fairly and consistently.

## **DEFINITIONS**

For purposes of this Code, the following definitions apply:

“Disruptive student” means an elementary or secondary student under the age of 21 who is substantially disruptive of the educational process or substantially interferes with the teacher’s authority over the classroom.

“Parent” means parent, guardian, or person in parental relation to a student.

“School property” means in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a public elementary or secondary school, or in or on a school bus.

“School function” means any school-sponsored extracurricular event or activity. “Violent student” means a student under the age of 21 who:

1. Commits an act of violence upon a school employee, or attempts to do so.
2. Commits, while on school property or at a school function, an act of violence upon another student or any other person lawfully on school property or at a school function, or attempts to do so.
3. Possesses, while on school property or at a school function, a weapon.
4. Displays, while on school property or at a school function, what appears to be a weapon.
5. Threatens, while on school property or at a school function, to use a weapon.
6. Knowingly and intentionally damages or destroys the personal property of any school employee or any person lawfully on school property or at a school function.
7. Knowingly and intentionally damages or destroys school property.

“Weapon” means a firearm as defined in 18 USC §921 for purposes of the Gun-Free Schools Act. It also means any other gun, BB gun, pistol, revolver, shotgun, rifle, machine gun, disguised gun, dagger, dirk, razor, stiletto, switchblade knife, gravity knife, brass knuckles, slingshot, metal knuckle knife, box cutter, cane sword, electronic dart gun, Kung Fu star, electronic stun gun, pepper spray or other noxious spray, explosive or incendiary bomb, or other device, instrument, material or substance that can cause physical injury or death when used to cause physical injury or death.

## **HARASSMENT**

The Hancock School District endeavors to maintain an environment free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. All members of the school community are expected to act in an appropriate manner and to show respect for others. It should be understood that harassment of any sort is not tolerated. Laws add weight to this statement of policy. Any case of harassment connected with race, color, national origin, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, handicap, or unwanted sexual attention, or any action which creates a hostile environment, such as a threat, creates a legal liability for both the student or students and the school. Students who feel that they have been subjected to harassment should immediately report the incident to a staff member. Harassment can result in a suspension or other disciplinary action.

The Hancock School District recognizes that harassment and intimidation have a negative effect on school climate. Students who are intimidated and fearful cannot give the single-minded attention they need for success. Harassment can also lead to more serious violence. Every student has the right to an education and to be safe in and around school.

1. **Definition of Harassment.** Harassment is a pattern of abuse over time and involves a student being “picked on”. Harassment includes physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name calling; threatening looks; gestures, or actions; cruel rumors; false accusations; and social isolation.
2. **Harassment is Prohibited.** The Hancock School District and staff shall not tolerate any harassment on District school grounds or at any activity on their school campus.
3. **Staff Intervention.** The District expects staff members who observe or become aware of an act of harassment to take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene-unless intervention would be a threat to staff member’s safety. If a staff member believes that his/her intervention has not resolved the matter, or if the harassment persists, he/she shall report harassment to the school administration for further investigation.
4. **Students and Parents Shall Report Harassment.** The District expects students and parents who become aware of an act of harassment to report it to the school administration for further investigation. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting harassment may be subject to the consequences listed below in paragraph six.

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5. Investigation Procedures. Upon learning about a harassment incident, the Principal or his/her designee shall contact the parents of both the aggressor and the victim, interview both students and thoroughly investigate the incident. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents and school staff; review of school records; and identification of parent and family issues.
6. Consequences/Intervention. Consequences for the students who harass others shall depend on the results of the investigation and may include counseling; a parent conference; detention; suspension and/or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident, the Principal may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan; separating and supervising the students involved; providing staff support for students as necessary; reporting incidents to law enforcement if appropriate; and developing a supervision plan with the parents.

### **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The Hancock School district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, sex, disability, religion, marital status, pregnancy, age or homelessness or veteran status in any of its policies, procedures, or practices, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (pertaining to race, color, and national origin), Title VII (pertaining to employment), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (pertaining to sex), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (pertaining to disability), the Americans with Disabilities Act (pertaining to disability), and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (pertaining to age).

Persons designated to coordinate compliance under Title IX:

Jay Merselis, Principal  
Hancock School  
3080 Hancock Road  
Hancock, MA 01237

Person designated to coordinate compliance under Section 504:

Jay Merselis, Principal  
Hancock School  
3080 Hancock Road  
Hancock, MA 01237

## **DISTRICT CURRICULUM ACCOMMODATION PLAN (DCAP)**

If any student experiences difficulty in the general education setting, the Principal shall implement the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan adopted by the district and required under M.G.L., c.71, §38Q. Such plan shall detail efforts that have been made or will be made to meet the needs of diverse learners in the general education program. As part of his/her responsibilities, the Principal shall promote instructional practices responsive to student needs and shall ensure that adequate instructional support is available for students and teachers. Instructional support shall include remedial instruction for students, consultative services for teachers, availability of reading instruction at the elementary level, appropriate services for linguistic minority students, and other services consistent with effective educational practices and requirements of M.G.L., c.71B, §2. The Principal may consult with the Director of Special Education regarding accommodations or interventions for students. The extent to which an individual student accesses the services depicted in the DCAP, shall be documented and placed in the student record. Additionally, if an individual student is referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education, the Principal shall ensure documentation on the use of instructional support services provided through the DCAP, including separate documentation generated through the Response to Intervention/ Student Teacher Assistance Team (RTI STAT). This documentation becomes part of the evaluation information reviewed by the special education team when determining “eligibility” for special education services.

## **HOME/HOSPITAL SERVICES**

The School Principal will provide the parent/guardian with the Physician’s Statement for Temporary Home or Hospital Education form to be completed and signed by the student’s physician. It is acceptable for parents to use the Home Hospital form available on the MA DESE website. The person signing this form must be a medical doctor, not a psychologist, therapist, or counselor. Once this has been returned to the Special Education Office and approved by the Administrator of Special Education, the building principal will initiate contact with a home tutor to plan services or contract with a hospital-assigned tutor. There is no waiting period (required absence days) for services to begin. The School Principal will direct the Guidance Counselor to send a home/hospital tutoring instruction form to each of the student’s classroom teachers and assist the tutor in contacting teachers for materials, transferring grades, etc. and to change attendance status. The completed Physician Statement will remain on file in the Special Education Office.

## **STUDENT ACCESS TO COUNSELING SERVICES**

The school Adjustment Counselor services students with and without disabilities in both individual and group format. Some students are seen on a regular basis while others are seen on an as-needed basis in response to periodic adjustment challenges or if in crisis. Students utilize counseling for the development of self-awareness and the achievement of long-term

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development goals. They also utilize counseling to help solve immediate academic, social, or family problems such as conflict resolution with teachers, peers, or family members.

### **REFERRAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TESTING**

The MA Regulations for Referral and Evaluation are detailed in 603 CMR 28.04. A student may be referred for an evaluation by a parent, teacher, administrator, the building-based student support team, or “other” professional. When a student is referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education, the school district shall send written notice to the student's parent(s) within five school days of receipt of the referral. The notice required by 603 CMR 28.04(1)(a) shall meet all of the content requirements set forth in M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, and in federal law and shall seek the consent of a parent for the evaluation to occur, and provide the parents with the opportunity to express any concerns or provide information on the student's skills or abilities. School districts shall provide the student's parents with an opportunity to consult with the Special Education Administrator or his/her designee to discuss the reasons for the referral, the content of the proposed evaluation, and the evaluators used. Upon referral, school districts shall evaluate children who are two and a half years of age and who may be receiving services through an early intervention program. An initial evaluation shall be conducted in order to ensure that if such child is found eligible, special education services begin promptly at age three.

When a student is referred for an evaluation by his/her parent, this request is sent immediately to the Principal and/or the Special Education Director. The school district is responsible to respond to the parent’s request within 5 school days. The Special Education Director will contact the parent immediately to let them know their request was received and provide the parent with the opportunity to express any concerns, provide information on the student’s skills or abilities, and/or discuss the proposed evaluation. If appropriate, the Special Education Director can elect to explain the Student Support Team process to the parent at this time. Once it is determined that the evaluation will move forward, the Special Education director or his/her designee will, with input from the student’s teachers and/or other professionals, determine what assessments will be recommended and seek consent of the parent for an evaluation.

Notification of the referral and a consent for evaluation is sent home for the parent to sign within 5 school days of the request for evaluation. When the signed consent is returned by the parent, the Special Education Director logs receipt of the consent to evaluate and counts out 30 school days (not calendar days) from the date the consent was received for evaluators to complete evaluations and 45 days for the team to hold a meeting to determine eligibility. Referrals/ requests for evaluation may come from parents orally or in writing. It is important for all staff to know that the school district must follow-up on verbal requests for evaluation from parents. The referral must be documented and written notice/ consent for evaluation must be sent home in the primary language of the parent/guardian with 5 school days of the request for evaluation.



Evaluations may not begin until parental consent is received by the school. Upon receipt of consent, the school district shall provide or arrange for the evaluation of the student by a multidisciplinary team within 30 school days and a team meeting will be set prior to the 45-day deadline. Whenever feasible, meeting will be scheduled prior to the 45<sup>th</sup> day deadline in order to allow for any last minute need to reschedule. Meetings must occur within 45 days. A Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards must be sent home with the written notice of proposed evaluations and the consent for evaluation form. All forms must be provided in the parent's native language. A parent may waive any of the specific assessments requested by the team. If this is the case, the case manager should complete a waiver form and have it signed by the parent.

The assessment tools shall be adapted to the age of the student and all testing shall meet the evaluation requirements set out in state and federal law. The school district shall ensure that appropriately credentialed and trained specialists administer all assessments.

It is the responsibility of the Special Education Director to generate the notice to reevaluate and send the parental consent form to a parent at least 60 days before the Individual Education Plan of a student will expire. If the TEAM decides that no additional assessments are needed to determine if the student is eligible for special education, the TEAM may recommend to the parent: a) That all assessments given at the initial evaluation be repeated b) That no further assessments are needed at this time and the reasons for this; and c) That the parent has a right to request a full evaluation or a specific assessment. A parent may waive any of the specific assessments requested in an evaluation. If this is the case, complete the waiver form and secure the proper signature(s). Documentation of multiple efforts to contact a parent in order to gain their consent must be maintained in the child's special education file. In the event that consent is not received, contact the Administrator of Special Education to determine the next step(s). The re-authorized IDEA 2004 only requires that a Parent's Rights Brochure be given to a parent once a year.

Both state and federal laws require evaluation of all areas related to the suspected disability. The evaluation should be comprehensive and child driven. No single procedure should be used as the sole criterion for determining eligibility. The Student Support Team or special education team with input from the parent determines the questions to be answered by the evaluation. The Hancock Public Schools uses a variety of assessment techniques and instruments to guarantee that the team will have a thorough understanding of the student's suspected disability and its effect on the child's ability to make progress in school. Evaluation may include formal and informal assessments. No individual assessment or assessor may determine eligibility for special education services

The following are required components of an intimal or re-evaluation assessment: ) 1. An assessment in all areas related to the suspected disability 2. An educational assessment by a representative of the school district, including a. a history of the student's educational progress in the general curriculum. Such assessment shall include information provided by a teacher(s) with

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current knowledge regarding the student's specific abilities in relation to learning standards of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the district curriculum; and b. an assessment of the student's attention skills, participation behaviors, communication skills, memory, and social relations with groups, peers, and adults. c. The school district shall also thoroughly evaluate and provide a narrative description of the student's educational and developmental potential. d. When a child is being assessed to determine eligibility for services at age three, an observation of the child's interactions in the child's natural environment or early intervention program is strongly encouraged. e. For children who are receiving early intervention services, school districts are encouraged to use current and appropriate assessments from early intervention teams, whenever possible, to avoid duplicate testing.

Other optional assessment may include the following: 1. A comprehensive health assessment by a physician that identifies medical problems or constraints that may affect the student's education. The school nurse may add additional relevant health information from the student's school health records. 2. A psychological assessment by a licensed school psychologist, licensed psychologist, or licensed educational psychologist, including an individual psychological examination. 3. A home assessment that may be conducted by a nurse, psychologist, social worker, guidance or adjustment counselor, or teacher and includes information on pertinent family history and home situation and may include a home visit, with the agreement of a parent.

Each person conducting an assessment shall summarize in writing the procedures employed, the results, and the diagnostic impression, and shall define in detail and in educationally relevant and common terms, the student's needs, offering explicit recommendations regarding specific services to meet the needs. The evaluator may recommend appropriate types of placements, but shall not recommend specific classrooms or schools. Summaries of assessments shall be completed prior to discussion by the Team and, upon request, shall be made available to the parents at least two days in advance of the team discussion at the meeting occurring pursuant to 603 CMR 28.05(1).

The school district shall review the IEPs and the progress of each eligible student at least annually. Additionally, every three years, or sooner, if necessary, the school district shall, with parental consent, conduct a full three-year reevaluation consistent with the requirements of federal law. Note: The process and timeline requirements are the same for both initial evaluations and reevaluations.

When a referral for evaluation is received with less than 30 school days remaining in the school year, every effort will be made to complete the evaluation and hold a TEAM meeting prior to the end of school. If it is not possible to complete the evaluation, it will be completed at the beginning of the next school year in adherence with all state and federal timeline requirements. In some cases, at the request of the TEAM, evaluation may be completed during the summer months with a TEAM meeting held the first or second week of school. Once eligibility for

special education services is determined, the IEP will be developed and placement will be determined

Upon receipt of evaluation results, if a parent disagrees with an initial evaluation or reevaluation completed by the school district, then the parent may request an independent educational evaluation (IEE). All independent education evaluations shall be conducted by qualified persons who are registered, certified, licensed or otherwise approved and who abide by the rates set by the state agency responsible for setting such rates. Unique circumstances of the student may justify an individual assessment rate that is higher than that normally allowed. The parent may obtain an independent educational evaluation at their own expense at any time.

When the parent requests public funding for an independent educational evaluation, the school representative must forward the request immediately to the Special Education Director. The district has 5 days to respond to the parent regarding whether or not the district will fund the evaluation. Within ten school days from the time the school district receives the report of the independent educational evaluation, the Team shall reconvene and consider the independent educational evaluation and whether a new or amended IEP is appropriate.

Whenever feasible, the building Principal will attend Team meeting. If a parent provides a report from an outside evaluator or service provider during a team meeting, the team should not consider the contents of the report on the spot. The Team Chair should take the report, date stamp the report, and let the parent know the team will reconvene within 10 days to consider the results and recommendations contained in the report.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS:**

### **School Nurse**

The Hancock School District has a full-time nurse. The nurse will:

- evaluate and manage the health needs of all students in the school within the scope of nursing care;
- identify and manage students with special health needs;
- work with other school-based groups to provide safe and healthy environments;
- administer medications as prescribed by a doctor when a signed order is provided by the parent/guardian
- provide first aid and emergency care;
- help families to get health insurance coverage and find a health care provider;
- manage the control of communicable diseases.

You can help the school nurse care for your child by:

- letting the nurse know if your child has any chronic or acute illnesses;
- communicating with the nurse directly if medication or health needs change;

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- updating your child’s emergency information so the school can always reach you.

**Immunization Requirements**

According to state regulations (102 CMR 7.09 and 105 CMR 220.00), students must be on an immunization schedule before they enter school. The Hancock Central School requires that students have immunizations that are up to date for school entry at the time they enter school. Records will be given to the school nurse for verification and record keeping purposes.

The following immunizations and a current physical need to be in place by the first day of school:

| Required Immunizations to Register              |  |
|---|--|
| Hepatitis B                                     | 3 doses  |
| DtaP/DTP/DT/Td                                  | 5 doses (1 Tdap gr. 7-11)                                |
| Polio   | 4 doses  |
| Hib   | 3 or 4 doses for pre-school                              |
| MMR   | 2 doses or Phase-In schedule                             |
| Varicella (Chickenpox)                          | 2 doses of Phase-In schedule or documentation of disease |
| *Immunization requirements vary by grade.       |  |
| Please contact the nurse if you have questions. |  |

Parents/guardians must submit a doctor’s record stating that their child has been immunized against the following: diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, German measles (rubella), mumps and hepatitis B. Varicella (chickenpox) immunization is required if the child has not had chickenpox.

The record must include the day, month, and year when the immunizations were given. In addition, we strongly recommend that each child have a Tuberculosis Risk Assessment. Parents are responsible for keeping immunizations current and informing the school nurse when their child has received additional immunizations. The school nurse reviews immunization records regularly.

**Special Situations**

Except in an emergency or epidemic, a student may start school if a parent or guardian presents a written statement (1) from a physician stating that the child has not been immunized for medical reasons, or (2) that the child has not been immunized due to his or her religious beliefs.

**Medical Emergencies**

If a student is sick or injured at school, the school will make every effort to reach the parent or the emergency contact person named on the student’s emergency contact file in the Principal’s

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office. The Principal and School Nurse will decide what action to take. Most illnesses and injuries that occur during the school day are minor and can be treated by the Nurse. If the student's condition is very serious, the Principal or another member of the school staff will call for an ambulance. A school employee may accompany the student to the hospital and stay with the student until the parent/guardian arrives.

### **Sick Student Protocol**

***I don't feel good!*** How do you decide if your child is too sick to go to school? It can be hard to decide sometimes! Here are some guidelines to help. It is advisable to keep your child home for the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 degrees or more. Your child should be fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication before returning to school.
- Similarly, children should not be in school if they have had vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours. They must be symptom-free without medication.
- If your child has a rash and a fever, they should be checked by their pediatrician. If your child has an undiagnosed rash for more than a few days, or one that is spreading, they need to be cleared by their MD to return to school.
- If your child has been diagnosed with strep throat, they need to be home until they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- When your child has purulent nasal discharge that lasts for more than a week, it is time to consult your pediatrician.
- If your child is so uncomfortable that they cannot do their school work, they need to recover at home.
- Typical flu symptoms include onset of fever, sore throat, cough, body aches and general malaise. Influenza is contagious and if your child has these symptoms, they should stay home to prevent spread of the disease. Treatment is bed rest, analgesics such as Tylenol or Motrin to reduce fever and plenty of liquids. Please immunize to prevent the flu.
- People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have a cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, or nausea or vomiting. Please call your MD to get advice about testing and treatment.
- If your child has frequent, vague symptoms in order to avoid going to school, it is best to see your pediatrician first to make sure there is no medical problem. Next, you can begin to evaluate problems at home, in the classroom, or with classmates. Speak to your child's teacher for more information. It is important that your child continues to go to school as you and your child resolve this problem.

Please remember that we seek to protect your child's health **and** the health of the entire school community! Please call the nurse anytime with questions or concerns.

**SCHOOL SCHEDULE:**

Teachers are ready to receive students at 7:45. School starts at 8:00 and ends at 2:30. The day is divided up into 45-minute periods with two before the first recess, two between the recesses, and three after lunch. Specialists are assigned days and times. Classroom teachers decide how to structure the remainder of the day.

**ABSENCES:**

If your child is going to be absent from school, please call the main office at 413-738-5676 or text the principal at 413-441-0081.

**AFTER SCHOOL CARE:**

After school care is available most school days (early dismissals included) and runs from the end of the regular day until 5:00. Families are billed \$4.50/hour in fifteen-minute increments for after school.

Students in after school can expect to spend time playing outdoors, weather permitting, and doing quieter activities inside. All of the students in PreK through sixth grade are together in the after-school program. Simple snacks are provided; it is recommended that students who know they will be in after school care bring their own snacks in case they do not like what is offered.

**AFTER SCHOOL HOMEWORK HELP:**

Homework help may be offered for students in grades two through six. Students electing to be in the homework room are expected to be in the room from the end of the day until 3:30; all should bring reading material or quiet activities in case homework is completed before 3:30. At 3:30 students are dismissed to parents/guardians or sent to the After School Care Program.

**LUNCH/SNACK:**

All Hancock students have a snack prior to the morning recess and eat lunch from 11:40 - 12:00. We encourage healthy snacks and lunch including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and healthy proteins. We discourage large quantities of sugary or overly processed foods. Due to food allergies, individual classrooms may have strict restrictions in place; these are updated as needed. There is a nut free table at lunch. Students sitting at that table may not have anything that contains nuts or is processed in a facility that also processes foods containing nuts.

Hancock Central School is now a nutrition site in partnership with the North Adams Public School District. Both breakfast and lunch will be provided daily. At this time there is no charge for either breakfast or lunch. Specific details regarding the program will be provided to parents at the start of the school year.

**RECESS:**

Hancock enjoys two recesses daily, the first from 9:35-9:50 and the second from 11:20-11:40. Teachers and/or paraprofessionals are assigned recess duty; generally, there are three people on duty during each recess. Whenever possible, all students go outside for recess. Games and activities are inclusive and appropriate for all ages to participate in. If there is inclement weather, recess takes place in individual classrooms.

**PRESCHOOL:**

Hancock’s Preschool program welcomes students who are 2.9 years old on September 1 in a combined 3- and 4-year-old classroom. The program meets four days/week following the annual school calendar. There is a half-day option which is dismissed at 11:20 and a full day option that runs until 2:30. Preschool students can stay in the After School Care program, billed at \$4.50/hour. The focus of the program is life skills and kindergarten readiness. Current full-time tuition is \$4,460 for Hancock residents. At this time the Hancock District provides preschool programming to Hancock residents only. Tuition is prorated based on the number of full and half days families select to attend.

**SCHOOL CHOICE:**

Each year the Hancock School Committee votes whether or not to participate in school choice. If they elect to continue, the Superintendent and Principal look carefully at enrollment to decide the number of openings available in each grade. Once students are enrolled at Hancock through school choice, they can remain at Hancock through sixth grade. If a student leaves the school choice program, he or she would need to reapply if they wish to return to Hancock. For the 2024 – 2025 school year, the Hancock School District will not accept any new students through the school choice program.

**HANCOCK ORGANIZATION OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS (HOPE):**

HOPE is an active and valuable organization that supports the school through the organization of many school and community activities. Traditions such as the Halloween Harvest Celebration, Thanksgiving Day Dinner, and community holiday gift basket program are just a few of the events sponsored through HOPE. Members include a number of stakeholders including parents, community members, teachers, staff members, and school committee members. Anyone who is interested in being part of nurturing and developing a sense of community with the school is welcome to join. Meetings are typically held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE:**

The Hancock school committee consists of five members. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at the Hancock Central School. All committee meetings are posted and include a

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Zoom link for parent and community convenience. Hancock is also part of a Union with the town of New Ashford. Union meetings are scheduled for September and January, with other meetings scheduled as needed. School Committee Policies are available in both hard copy and digitally. Policies outlined in this handbook can be reviewed in full by requesting a copy from the Superintendent of Schools. Committee Meeting Zoom Link:



**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**  
**2024 - 2025**

We, the undersigned parent(s)/guardian(s) and student \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Student)  
(Please Print)

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ have received and will read, or have read to us, the **2022 – 2022**

**Hancock Central School Student Handbook**

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Student**

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian**

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_