



HANDBOOK
2016-2017

Dear Parents,

On behalf of the faculty and staff, we wish to welcome our new and returning students as well as their families to Stevens Forest Elementary School. We are excited about the upcoming school year and look forward to working together as partners in your child's education. You are encouraged to visit your child's classroom, take part in the many volunteer opportunities that are available, and become an active member of the Stevens Forest PTA. We also invite you to contact the school with any questions or concerns regarding your child's academic progress. A relationship between home and school based on open communication further ensures your child's success in school and our ability to provide the best educational program. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns at any point in the school year, we encourage you to contact us. Together, we can build a successful and rewarding environment for the new school year.

Ernesto Diaz, Principal
Tracey Albright, Assistant Principal

Mission Statement:

To establish and maintain a Safe, Fun, Enriching, and Stimulating learning environment that prepares each and every child to be college and career ready.

Vision Statement

Stevens Forest ES provides the highest quality education to every student in a safe and nurturing learning environment while preparing our students to be lifelong learners who can achieve excellence and become contributing citizens in a globally competitive world.

Student Hours: 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Entrance: Students will be permitted to enter the school building beginning at 8:45 AM. Students should not arrive prior to 8:45 AM, as there is no adult supervision available for early arriving students. Prior to entering the building, students should line up in the designated areas by grade under the canopy. Students transported to school by car may be dropped off directly in front of the school using the bus lane circle. Parents who wish to park their cars in the community association parking lot should escort their child safely across the parking areas to the sidewalk at the front of the school.

Dismissal: Bus riders and walkers will be dismissed at 3:25 PM. Car riders will be dismissed at 3:30 PM. Students will exit the building through the front doors. Children who walk with other students should report to the courtyard in front of the school. Parents who transport their children home by car will be permitted into the bus lane driveway after busses have exited. (Please form a line as directed.). Parents who choose to transport students via car will be assigned number placards to be displayed on their rearview mirror. In order to dismiss students quickly and safely, we ask that parents and other family members who will be picking up students await their exit outside the front entrances. Students must be picked up promptly as there is no available supervision after school.

Traveling To/From School Safely: When transporting students by car, drivers are reminded to exercise caution while traveling on or near school property. Parking is only permitted in the neighborhood association lot. The bus lane is open at arrival and dismissal for drop-off and

pickup only. Therefore, please do not park in the bus lane during these times.

Students who walk to school should be reminded about traveling safely to and from school. Our school staff and safety patrols are available to assist students while on school grounds. Children should follow all safety rules when walking to and from school. Students should remain on the sidewalks and should utilize crosswalks at intersections.

Dogs During Arrival/Dismissal: To ensure the safety of all students during arrival and dismissal, dogs are not permitted on school grounds.

Release of Pupils During School Hours: Parents must report to the front office when picking up their child for an early dismissal. Students will be called to the school office for dismissal upon the parent's arrival. If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up a child for an early dismissal, the person must be granted permission as indicated on the emergency card or by providing a note from the parent/guardian. Early release of pupils close to the regular dismissal time is discouraged.

Absence From School: Regular attendance at school is necessary for students to make maximum educational progress as well as to participate fully in the educational program provided at Stevens Forest. All students are expected to attend school regularly. Lawful absences from school include the following: illness of the child, death in the immediate family, court summons, and religious holiday obligations. Students who are absent from school must provide a note stating the date and reason for the absence upon their return to school. Absences without a note are considered unexcused.

According to the Board of Education's policy, a form must be filled out for **any** extended absence or discretionary absence. The form may be obtained from the school or electronically: www.hcpss.org/about-us/forms. **This written request should be received at least two weeks before the scheduled absence.** Students will be permitted to make up schoolwork for all lawful absences. Teachers will determine whether schoolwork missed for vacation purposes will be made up prior to or after the absence.

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance four or more hours during the school day. A student is counted present for a half day if in attendance for at least two hours of the school day, but less than four hours.

Students who are regularly in attendance at school will not only make maximum educational progress, but may be eligible for special recognition at the end of the school year. Families of students who are excessively absent from school will be contacted by an administrator and possibly by our Pupil Personnel Worker for referral to the State's Attorney's Office.

Late Arrivals: Students who arrive after 9:00 AM will be considered tardy and must report to the main office for a late pass to their classroom. Parents must accompany late arriving students to the front office. Students who are excessively tardy miss important directions and organizational time at the start of the school day. Additionally, they may disrupt the classroom as they enter after the school day has begun. We encourage students to arrive promptly at school each day.

Visiting During School Hours: We strongly encourage all parents to visit their child's classroom during the school year. Visitation may be restricted, however, due to activities occurring in the classroom such as testing. Therefore, a classroom visit must be requested at least 24-hours in advance with your child's teacher. Upon arrival at the school, please sign in at the main office. Parents are not permitted to escort their children to the classroom at the start of the school day or pick them up from the classroom at the end of the day without administrator approval. Students should enter and exit the building on their own. If you need to speak to your child's teacher during the school day please call or leave a message in the school office. Our secretaries will ensure that the message is delivered to the teacher in a timely manner.

Field Trips: In order to provide activities, which either extend concepts taught in school or provide experiences not available in the curriculum, field trips are provided. Most field trips charge a fee for transportation and an admission cost. Every effort is made to keep field trip costs reasonable. Parents are welcome to assist as chaperones as needed. In cases where the number of chaperones must be limited, chaperones will be selected first from those parents who have not had the opportunity to chaperone on any previous field trip and/or by random lottery. Siblings are prohibited from accompanying parents on field trips due to insurance liability regulations.

Withdrawal From School: If it is necessary to withdraw a child before the end of the school year, please inform the school several days in advance so there will be no delay of transfer information. We will provide you with copies of your child's immunization and birth certificate for your convenience if needed. All school records will be forwarded to your child's new school upon written request from that school.

Accident and Illness: The health room is staffed by a cluster nurse and health assistant during school hours. First aid and TLC are dispensed for all cuts, bruises, headaches, tummy aches, and minor "emergencies." No medication is dispensed without the written authorization of the child's doctor. Should your child require medication during the school day, please check with our health assistant to make sure all proper forms and instructions are on file. Emergency information is maintained for every child enrolled in the school. Please make sure any changes in phone numbers, addresses, work information and designated emergency contact persons are reported to the office as soon as possible. If you are called to pick up your child due to illness, please do so promptly.

Medication Guidelines: The following guidelines for medication have been established by the Howard County Department of Education:

1. Before giving any medication, the principal shall have written permission from a parent and have complete written instructions from the prescribing physician, including date of order, identification of drug by name, dosage, time and circumstances of administration, length of time medication is to be continued, reason for prescription, and possible side effects. This information should be provided on the Howard County Department of Education form, which can be obtained from the Health Assistant.
2. All medication should be clearly labeled with the student's name, time and amount of medication to be taken. The principal or designee (usually the cluster nurse or health assistant) is responsible for observing while the student takes the medication to assure

that it is done in accordance with the physician's written instructions and the medicine label.

3. School personnel are not allowed to administer any type of medication without all data as described in Item 1 being complete.

Bicycle Racks: Students should use locks to secure their bikes in the bike racks provided in front of the school. The school cannot assume responsibility for loss of or damage to bicycles. Please emphasize good bike safety and manners to your children if they ride to and from school. All students who ride bikes to and from school must wear helmets. Students should walk their bikes while on school property.

Homework Expectations: Research shows that student achievement increases significantly when teachers regularly assign homework and students conscientiously complete assignments. We encourage parents to review homework with their child. Well-designed homework assignments directly relate to class work and extend students' learning beyond the classroom. Homework is assigned at each grade level to reinforce skills and concepts taught in the classroom. We urge students and parents to keep the following list in mind for homework completion.

- Students should not leave school without understanding given homework assignments. They should ask the teacher for clarification if needed.
- Have a specific time and place to do homework. This is where parents are the biggest help.
- Start BEFORE students are sleepy or tired.
- Have an alternate plan for days when the student is involved in after-school activities.
- Remember - school must be the first priority in a child's activities.
- There is always independent reading and each child should have a media or library book at home to be read for at least 15-20 minutes each day. In addition, students are encouraged to study math facts on a regular basis.

Child Abuse: Any student suspected of being physically/sexually abused or neglected will be referred to the Department of Social Services for possible investigation. All teachers and staff members must report such incidents by school board policy and by law.

SFES Behavior Expectations: In order to ensure a safe and nurturing school environment, an appropriate standard of behavior must be established and maintained during the course of the school day. Behavioral success at Stevens Forest will depend upon each student's willingness to follow our three guiding principles:

- 🐾 Be Respectful
- 🐾 Be Responsible
- 🐾 Be Ready

Students who successfully follow these rules will receive positive recognition. Examples of positive recognition include verbal praise, positive parent phone calls, and Bobcat tickets. Children can redeem their saved Bobcat tickets for a variety of wonderful incentives. Students who fail to follow the standards of behavior will earn consequences, which may include disciplinary action by the school administration. Additionally, parents should review

the Howard County Code of Student Conduct that will be distributed at the start of the school year.

Friday Folder/Weekly Newsletter: A weekly school newsletter is sent home on most Friday's in this parent handbook folder (known as the Friday Folder). This is a VITAL form of communication between the school and the home. It contains information about our school, special events, and weekly communication from the principal. Please read the SFES Newsletter and keep it available for handy reference during the coming week. In addition, parents may access weekly school newsletters by visiting our school webpage at www.sfes.hcps.org. The Friday Folder will also contain completed student work, team notices, and other important notices for parents to review.

Programs & Resources: Stevens Forest is very fortunate to be able to offer various programs and resources to enhance student achievement and enrich our students' learning experiences.

- Music/Instrumental Programs: String instrument instruction is offered to students in grades 3-5. Wind, brass, and percussion instrument lessons are offered for those in grades 4 and 5. Instruction is held during the school day. Information is sent home at the start of the school year regarding our instrumental music program.
- Media Center: The Media Center has a wide range of print and non-print materials, which children use extensively. Parents are asked to remind children of their responsibility in caring for and returning borrowed books on time. If a book is lost, parents are required to remit the cost of the book.
- Gifted and Talented Program: GT teachers in every elementary school provide special curriculum and services. Stevens Forest offers enrichment programs to enhance students' learning experiences. The Gifted and Talented program includes instructional seminars, curriculum extension units, and a differentiated mathematics curriculum. Our programs are designed to challenge each student through interdisciplinary, multidimensional teaching approaches involving special curricula, enrichment, and the acceleration of course content.

Breakfast/Lunch Program: Student breakfast is available for all students everyday for free. Breakfast is served in the classroom. Students may select from the following: milk, juice, cereal, muffin/bagel. It is extremely important that your child eats a healthy breakfast everyday. When students have eaten properly, they are better able to engage in instruction.

A balanced hot lunch is served daily in our school, following a county prepared menu. Students bringing their own bag lunches may purchase milk and snacks. Parents may prepay for student meals by setting up an online account at myschoolbucks.com. There is a \$2.25 processing fee for each transaction. Each transaction can be up to \$120.00 in total. The price of lunches for elementary school students is \$2.75 and milk is \$0.50. A listing of snack prices will be published in the cafeteria. (All prices are subject to change.) Students who bring their lunch to school may not store their food/beverage in glass containers and are not permitted to access a microwave at school. Free and reduced lunches are available to those children who meet federal guidelines. Confidential forms are available in

the school's office and at <http://www.hcps.org/food-services/farms/> The reduced lunch cost is \$0.40.

Birthday Celebrations: Each child will have their name read over the announcements on their birthday and receive a small birthday gift. The Wellness through Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy (policy 9090) places restrictions on food and beverages that students can be served during the school day. One of those restrictions prohibits the sharing of treats on a child's birthday. **Parents and students are not allowed to bring in any food to share with their classmates for a birthday.**

Lost and Found: Lost articles are kept on a clothing rack in the cafeteria. Small items (glasses, keys, etc.) will be kept in the main office. Your child may look for lost articles during lunchtime and before/after school. Lost articles not claimed will be donated to charity twice per school year. Please label your child's belongings whenever possible.

Telephone Calls: The office phone is for use by school system employees for business and emergency use. Students will not be permitted to use the telephone for non-emergency situations. Incoming messages will be passed to students in emergency situations. However, it is very difficult to pass messages to children after 3:00 PM, as this is a busy time for teachers, students, and office staff. For the safety of your child, please notify the front office of messages for students before 2:30 PM.

Weather Announcements: When school closes early or opens late or due to inclement weather, announcements will be made via www.hcps.org as well as local radio and television stations prior to 7:30 AM. Please refrain from calling the main office for information so that the telephone lines remain open for emergency calls.

Testing Program: Testing of children is an integral part of the school program. It supplies necessary evaluation information about the needs and progress of individual students. Testing occurs on a regular basis in all subject areas. Once testing dates are confirmed, a schedule will be sent home/posted at <http://www.hcps.org/academics/testing/>

Special tests include:

PARCC – Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers

MAP – Measurement of Academic Progress

CogAT – Cognitive Abilities Test

MSA Science – Maryland School Assessment-Science

We urge you to avoid scheduling any doctor or dentist appointments during the above testing. It may have a negative impact on your child's test scores and may interrupt the testing schedule.

Report Cards and Progress Reports: There are four marking periods during the school year. After the first and second, conferences will be held. To facilitate this, school closes early on some days and all day on others. Parents will be notified of appointment times. Every effort will be made to schedule times that are convenient within the given time frames. Report

cards will be sent home with children at the end of the first three marking periods, and they will be mailed to parents at the end of the school year in June.

Progress reports will be issued on the following dates:

1st Quarter – October 6	2nd Quarter - December 21
3rd Quarter – March 8	4th Quarter – May 18

Marking periods end on the following dates:

1st Quarter – November 4	2nd Quarter - January 26
3rd Quarter – April 7	4th Quarter – last day of school

Report cards will be issued on the following dates:

1st Quarter - November 15	2nd Quarter – February 3
3rd Quarter - April 25	4th Quarter - will be mailed

Parent/Teacher Conference days are as follows:

November 21 & 22 (PM) - November 23 (all day)
March 9 & 10 (PM)

Meetings: While designated parent/teacher conference dates are included in the school calendar, parents are welcomed to arrange meetings with teachers whenever a need arises. However, parents are urged to remember that teachers cannot hold meetings during instructional time. Private conversations between parents and teachers in the presence of students detracts from the educational program, causes unnecessary disruptions, and is usually unfruitful for the parent because the teacher is unable to give full attention at the time. A telephone call or note indicating a desire for a meeting will receive immediate attention.

Important School Board Policies: It is our goal to provide a safe and orderly school environment for children at school. Please note the HCPSS policies listed below. A complete list of all Howard County Public School System policies can be found on the school system's website: www.hcpss.org/board/policies.

Dress Code – The Howard County Public School System accepts as an educational task the responsibility of encouraging all students to develop habits of proper dress and grooming. To this end, clothing considered to be disruptive, dangerous or provocative shall not be worn during school hours and school activities. Additionally, dress and grooming shall meet health and sanitary standards. Headwear should not be worn inside the school building. Specific examples of headgear include hats, visors, scarves, bandannas, sweatbands and forehead bands.

The Student Dress Code (Policy 9210) can be found in the Howard County Public School System Parent/Student Handbook for 2016-17.

Violence and School Safety –The Board of Education is committed to providing a nurturing, respectful educational and work environment, where the worth and dignity of individuals are valued and their safety and rights protected. Behaviors that compromise this commitment, interfere with school operations or are otherwise contrary to the basic mission of public schools will not be tolerated. Threats, profanity, defamation, harassment, assault, battery, hazing, and intimidation are prohibited in the Howard County Public School System.

Reporting Acts of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - The school system is committed to safe school environments as outlined in Policy 1040. In addition, as a result of legislation passed in 2008, the Board of Education developed Policy 1060 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment or Intimidation, which establishes expectations for maintaining a safe and respectful school climate where bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and intimidation are not tolerated. Policy 1060 requires compliance with the Maryland Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 which provides for any student, staff member, parent/guardian or close adult relative of a student to report any incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored activity or event off school property, on a school bus that substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school. Reporting forms are available in all HCPSS main offices, school-counseling offices, the media center, and health offices. It can also be found on the website. See Policy 1060 for additional information. Visit www.hcpss.org for a reporting form and a copy of the *Howard County Public School System Student/Parent Handbook*.

Weapons on School Property - It is unlawful for students to possess or use any weapon on school property. Students who have or use a weapon on school property will be suspended from school and the police will be notified of the incident. A weapon is any object designed to harm another physically or an object that is used in a way that can physically harm another. This school is committed to providing everyone with a safe environment and we will do all we can to carry out that responsibility. The school reserves the right to search any school area at any time.

Discrimination – The Board of Education will not tolerate any act of discrimination, intimidation, harassment, or hate/bias, based on race, color, creed, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation by students, employees or third parties.

Student Assault on Staff – The Board of Education recognizes the need for a school environment that is orderly and safe. This environment must allow school staff to be free from physical assault by students. Therefore, any physical assault by a student on school staff is strictly forbidden. If the principal determines, after investigation, that a student has assaulted a member of the staff, the principal will suspend the student, refer the case to the Office of the Superintendent, and notify the police.

Tobacco Free Environment - All Howard County School property is tobacco free. The use or possession of any tobacco product, cigarette, and/or rolling papers by students is prohibited in school buildings, in school vehicles, on school property, field trips, and at school bus stops at all times.