



400 Cranford Road • Cherry Hill, NJ 08003 • 856.429.2058 • Jonathan Cohen, Principal

Principal's Welcome:

September 2023

Dear Woodcrest Family:

Welcome to the 2023-24 school year! As we embark on this school year's journey, I wish to take this opportunity to give special greetings to those who are returning and welcome aboard those who are new to Woodcrest. It was just 9-years ago that I returned to Woodcrest Elementary—after serving as a student-teacher here nearly 3 decades ago—and I continue to feel incredibly fortunate to have rejoined this wonderful learning community!

Speaking of community, in creating a successful community of learners, we recognize the importance of our working in partnership to foster a positive and safe environment that is conducive to learning. As in any community, there are a variety of issues that affect the school climate. This handbook has been prepared to address these issues and to serve as a reference whenever you or your child/ren have questions about the school in general.

We ask you to take the time to familiarize yourself and your child with the philosophy and procedures related to student life at Woodcrest Elementary School.

The Woodcrest staff—whose reputation as phenomenally dedicated, caring and committed professionals precedes them—is devoted to ensuring that every student achieves to his or her academic potential. To achieve this goal, communication between the school and home is essential. Your support and involvement are very important to your children's progress. As a matter of fact, a growing body of research clearly indicates that student outcomes are greatly enhanced when parents/guardians attend and actively support school functions and take advantage of opportunities to volunteer in the school. This level of involvement has been linked to improved student attitudes, attendance and ultimately academic success.

Each of us has an important role in making this a successful school year, and we look forward to collaborating with you to achieve this goal. It is for this reason that we will maintain #togetherWEcan as this year's theme!

Again, welcome!

Yours in education,

Mr. Jonathan Cohen

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Attendance:

Like all Cherry Hill schools, Woodcrest maintains high expectations for attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance and punctuality enables students to benefit from well-planned and well-delivered instructional activities, including classroom discussions, presentations and cooperative activities. These shared academic experiences are integral to the learning process and cannot be recreated or replicated. In order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefit for each child, the process of education requires continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences and study.

Attendance and punctuality play a significant role in a student's success at school and are essential life skills. However, the overwhelming majority of children become ill at some point during the school year. Given that we do not want to add an additional stressor to those that are sick, we will not recognize students for perfect attendance. In many cases, promoting perfect attendance results in sick students, who are often contagious, attending school.

TARDY: A child not in the classroom by 9:00 AM is considered late. When your child is going to be tardy, please call the Woodcrest absentee line at 429-2058 (select prompt 1). Students, who are tardy for school, should report to the school office upon arrival. *Please note that adult supervision is not available prior to 8:45 each morning.*

ABSENCE: When your child is going to be absent, please call the Woodcrest absentee line at 429-2058 (select prompt 1). It will be necessary for school staff to call home and/or work if a note or a phone call from a parent/guardian does not verify a child's absence. A note with a parent's/guardian's signature explaining the nature of the absence is requested upon the first day of return.

MAKE-UP WORK FOR ABSENCES: When your child is out sick, we encourage you to request make-up work and/or homework; however, please make the request as early as possible. Given the time required to organize make-up work, requests received after 11:30 AM cannot be guaranteed.

TRUANCY/EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM: Referrals for truancy, or excessive absenteeism, will be made to the district Attendance Compliance Officer, who will investigate the nature and cause of the attendance patterns and take the appropriate action.

School Hours:

The hours at Woodcrest School are 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM, and for days designated as early dismissal, students are released at 1:00 PM. Students begin arriving at 8:45.

Please note that there is no outdoor supervision prior to 8:45 AM.

Student Drop-off:

Parents dropping their child off to school during the supervised window of time of 8:45-9:00 should drop their child off at the new wing entrance. **Due to serious safety concerns with bus and staff parking traffic, please do not drop off students at the rear of the bldg.**

Any child arriving after 9:00 AM is considered late and must be escorted, through the main (front) entrance, by a parent/guardian to be signed in.

Dismissal:

Children are dismissed as follows:

Bus Students	Bus Transportation	From their classrooms
	Parent Pickup	Main Office
*Walkers	Kindergarten and First Grade	Gated area to the left of the main entrance
	Students in Grades 2-5 Being Picked up in Front of bldg.	New Wing Front Doors
	Walkers who live near Haddonfield-Berlin Rd.	
	Walkers who live behind the school	New Wing Back Doors

*Parents wishing to meet their children along Cranford Drive (by the swim club) are asked to send in a note to make this request.

Student Pickup:

For parents of bus students, if you plan to pick your child up during dismissal, it is imperative that a note be sent in to the teacher to ensure s/he does not ride the bus. You will be required to sign your child out; please be prepared to present identification.

For parents of walkers that wish to meet or pickup your child, please refer to the dismissal chart above.

Early Pickup:

As a general guideline, children should not leave during school hours, except for an emergency. We do recognize that scheduling a doctor's or dentist's appointment during the school day is sometimes unavoidable. In such cases a note should be sent to the child's teacher on that day, and the parent must come to the office to sign the child out of school. For security purposes, we ask that parents be prepared to present identification to the office staff.

Emergency School Closure/2-Hour Delayed Opening:

If adverse weather conditions cause a cancellation of school, the district emergency phone system will be activated to provide automated phone messages to the primary phone number you provided. Word of the closing will also be sent to local, Philadelphia radio (KYW 1060) and television stations (Comcast-19 and FIOS-24) for announcement. Each school district is assigned a code number; Cherry Hill's code number is **551**.

For two-hour delays, all grade levels (K-5) will follow an 11:00 AM -3:30 PM schedule. When determining your child's amended bus stop pick up time, simply add two hours to the regularly scheduled time.

Closing school early due to inclement weather is avoided as much as possible. However, please discuss your family's emergency plan with your children just in case safety dictates an unanticipated early dismissal. We will attempt to make contact with parents/guardians through our automated telephone service. Children whose parents/guardians cannot be reached will remain at school until an emergency adult contact is notified.

Transfers/Withdrawals:

Please contact the office as soon as possible when planning to move; we will provide you with information on how to proceed to make the transfer as smooth as possible.

Academic Program:

Differentiated instruction is integral to the way the Cherry Hill School District “does business.” Differentiation is an instructional approach for each elementary grade level without “walls or ceilings” for students, ensuring that each student is challenged by a variety of instructional strategies suited to his/her achievement and ability levels, learning styles and interests. All students in every classroom at every grade level are nurtured and encouraged to learn and grow to their full potential.

The elementary curriculum emphasizes total child development—cognitive, affective, social and physical. The curriculum is directed by a five-year plan, which ensures that all programs are reviewed and updated cyclically. This plan considers the Core Curriculum Standards approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. It is developed and implemented through input from teachers and administrators, ensuring that all programs represent current theory and practice and reflect high expectations of students.

Copies of the curriculum—including the “Family Life Topics” portions of the Health Curriculum—are available for your review in the principal's office.

Classroom Assignments:

The Cherry Hill School District cannot honor requests from parents/guardians for placement with a particular teacher or in a particular class. However, each spring, parents are encouraged to provide the principal with written feedback outlining their child's strengths, areas of need as well as the optimal classroom environment (e.g., structured, nurturing, etc.).

Reporting Progress:

Trimester report cards, interim progress reports and parent-teacher conferences are the primary means by which to inform parents of a child's progress in school.

Woodcrest Elementary is committed to effective communication between students, teachers and parents. Conferences will be held twice a year. Additional conferences may be initiated, as needed, by parents or teachers throughout the year. If you think your child is experiencing academic, social or emotional issues, please do not wait for the regularly scheduled conferences—contact your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Please note that arrangements for conferences should be made in advance. Upon arrival for a scheduled conference, please report to the main office. When the need arises to informally contact the teacher, email and voicemail are the most expedient.

Homework:

Homework is the opportunity for students to practice specific skills, to extend learning, to remediate learning, to provide enrichment and to make up assignments not completed in class. Furthermore, it is important for students to develop a sense of responsibility for their learning. Teachers and parents are important partners in helping students learn this responsibility. Taking into consideration the benefits of regular homework and how it can enhance the children's education, Woodcrest Elementary is committed to setting clear expectations for homework and communicating those expectations to students and their families.

MAKE-UP HOMEWORK FOR ABSENCES: When your child is out sick, we encourage you to request make-up work and/or homework; however, please make the request as early as possible. Given the time required to organize make-up work, requests received after 11:30 AM cannot be guaranteed.

NO HOMEWORK FAMILY NIGHTS: As mentioned above there is tremendous value in engaging in meaningful homework assignments that reinforce concepts and skills taught during the school day. However, there are times when we need to collectively have a break from the responsibilities of homework, so starting in October, the first Monday of each month is designated as *Family Night* at Woodcrest. (The only exceptions include the months of December and March due to the winter and spring breaks.) On Family Nights, no homework is assigned, which provides our Woodcrest families with the opportunity to spend time together relaxing, enjoying outdoor activities, sporting events and so on.

Field Trips:

Field Trips are planned to enrich, enhance and extend our academic programs. Equitable measures (e.g., lotteries) will be employed to select interested chaperones. *All students attending field trips must ride district appointed transportation to and from the field trip destination, and parents may only sign children out from the school after we return.* If you elect to keep your child home on the day of a field trip, per state statute, the absence is unexcused.

Character Education:

Character Education is a lifelong developmental process by which children learn about and apply core ethical or shared values to their lives. Woodcrest is proud to have earned the distinction of being named as a State and National School of Character based on our best practices and integrated programming.

Art:

Creative expression is a universal component of human culture. Art education addresses the needs of the whole child. Exposing children to rich and artistic works will enable them to celebrate and appreciate cultural differences and similarities. The art program at Woodcrest will encourage problem solving, concentration, self-discipline, cooperation and individuality and afford children both verbal and nonverbal avenues for communication allowing them choices for self-expression.

Music:

Music is an academic discipline in which students simultaneously develop cognitive and physical abilities as well as social skills. The vast research on the discipline of music includes the following educational benefits:

- Sharpens student attentiveness
- Strengthens perseverance
- Supports better study habits and self-esteem
- Improves recall and retention of verbal information
- Advances math achievement
- Boosts reading and English Language Arts skills
- Enhances fine motor skills
- Fosters superior working memory
- Cultivates better thinking skills

GENERAL MUSIC classes at Woodcrest expose every child to a musical learning environment that is positive and encourages creativity. Students receive age appropriate lessons that consist of kinesthetic, visual and aural experiences. Through the playing of instruments, reading of music and other multi-tasking abilities, students learn to work together as a team to achieve a common goal. These experiences provide our children with an enriching appreciation for the arts as well as a positive outlet for individual growth.

WOODCREST CHORUS is open to all of our fifth graders.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC serves to raise self-esteem and improve academic performance—just name a couple of the many benefits! It is offered to all fourth and fifth grade students with the only requirement being a desire to learn an instrument. Group lessons are provided on a weekly basis, and this program culminates in Winter and Spring Concert performances for all to appreciate and enjoy.

Physical Education:

Physical education is an integral part of Woodcrest’s instructional program. All students are afforded the opportunity to participate in physical and health-related activities that improve health, fitness, motor skill development, safety practices, positive social skills, team building and sportsmanship—just to name a few areas of emphasis!

Library and Media Center:

The Woodcrest Media Center is an exciting haven where books and media come alive! Children are encouraged to explore the library independently, use research skills to answer questions about the world around them and appreciate different genres of literature. Information literate individuals are responsible, independent, lifelong users of information, capable of accessing, organizing, evaluating, synthesizing and communicating information in all its forms.

Computer Science:

The Cherry Hill School District is committed to the infusion of technology into all aspects of the educational program, making the use of technology natural to the educational experience and inherent to the way students work and think, in and beyond the classroom. To that end, with Computer Science, students develop needed technological skills as well as supplement in-class instruction with integrated units of study.

Intervention & Referral Services (I&RS):

Woodcrest Elementary School operates a multidisciplinary I&RS Committee comprised of a cross-section of professional faculty members. The I&RS Committee offers teachers and parents with a means of drawing on the resources of both the individual school and the larger district in an effort to assist students experiencing academic, behavioral, health, social, or emotional difficulties. Any staff member or parent may request that a child's needs be considered by I&RS. This process is the mechanism by which district educational support services can be accessed to assist in providing success for all students.

Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program:

In general, many Woodcrest students have an elevated achievement level, so most of their needs are met within the regular classroom. A variety of adaptations and accommodations are made by the classroom teacher, including tiered assignments, differentiated expectations and flexible ability grouping and enrichment opportunities.

Beginning in third grade, children that qualify for the TAG program, through an array of assessments, have their unique needs met through specialized curriculum study.

Child Study Team Services:

The Child Study Team (CST) is a group of specialists employed by the Cherry Hill School District to provide consultative, evaluative and prescriptive services to teachers, parents and students. The CST, along with the school principal and the Intervention & Referral Services Committee, makes recommendations for programs and placements that best address the unique needs of students who experience school-related difficulties.

Counseling Services:

Not too long ago, school guidance services were provided only to children experiencing serious issues or problems. Today, we have a full time counselor who provides a broad spectrum of services that are an integral part of the educational process for every child. Our counselor, Mrs. LaGamba, implements a comprehensive developmental program that focuses on educating the whole child—living in family, school and community systems—to produce positive educational outcomes.

Health Services:

Mrs. Olin, our school nurse, is available if your child becomes sick or injured during the school day. Parents will be notified if the situation cannot be remedied by simple first aid. It is very important that all the information on the student data sheets is correct so that parents can be contacted promptly in an emergency. If any of the contact information changes, particularly parents' work numbers, please notify the school nurse and the main office of the new number so that we may reach you when you are needed.

Any medication, including over-the-counter medications, that needs to be taken during the school hours must be in its original container and *requires written authorization from the parent/guardian and a physician*. **All medication must be delivered to the nurse by a parent or guardian.**

Physical exams are required of all new enrollees as well as students in kindergarten. Physicals must be completed by the student's family physician.

Your child will be screened yearly in height, weight, blood pressure, sight and hearing. Deviations from the norm will be screened a second time. If deviation is noted again, the parent will be notified. All 10 year olds will also be screened for scoliosis.

Child Abuse and/or Neglect:

Any knowledge or suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect must be reported immediately to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (formerly The Division of Youth and Family Services). Failure of a staff member to make a report is a violation of the law. All information is kept confidential. The building principal, school nurse and school counselor have further information relating to this process.

School Citizenship:

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE – the goal of our school discipline system is to help children learn to regulate their own behavior. We try to take into account the developmental level of students and explicitly teach certain behaviors to our younger students. Mistakes are an opportunity for children to learn more about themselves and their place in the world; positive behavior is an opportunity for recognition. By the time our students reach fifth grade, personal responsibility for good behavior should be deeply ingrained.

We seek to develop in students a sense of responsibility that causes them to interact appropriately with one another in a way that provides a safe environment for all. A safe environment, in turn, creates a climate that is conducive to learning. Our concern for safety is not limited to the physical environment, but includes caring for others and fostering social competency, positive values and a positive identity.

STUDENT DRESS – the most sensible guideline for parents/guardians to consider is clothes that are appropriate, modest and safe. Examples of inappropriate and/or unsafe dress include hats, open sandals, shoes without heel straps, bare midriffs and t-shirts with provocative images or slogans.

UNSAFE/INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS – items that are deemed unsafe or may cause a distraction from the learning process are not permitted in the school.

- Dangerous items include razors, penknives, matches, lighters, fireworks, or anything that common sense would dictate as being unsafe for children in a school setting.
- Items of value that are often lost or damaged include—but are not limited to— electronic devices, tablets, MP3 players and cash exceeding \$10.

Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB):

Per the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-24) and Board policy 5131, the Cherry Hill Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a pupil. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or physically aggressive behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in an emotionally and physically safe and disciplined environment.

Transportation/Bus Safety:

Transportation provided by Cherry Hill Board of Education is a privilege, and as such, proper bus behavior is expected and required. Two bus evacuation drills are scheduled during the school year.

Students must ride the bus to which they have been assigned. Additionally, the following is expected:

Be Safe — Be Respectful — Be Responsible	
Be Safe	Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
	Keep the aisle clear
	Remain in your assigned seat
Be Respectful	Obey Bus Driver's Instructions
	Use appropriate language
	Treat others with kindness and respect
Be Responsible	Report problems
	Use indoor voice

Bicycles:

To ensure the safety of walkers, once on school grounds, we ask that students walk their bicycles to the rack provided at the front of the building. Per state law, helmets are required, and locks are needed to deter theft.

Pupil Records:

Your child's records contain only information that is relevant to their education and is objectively based on personal observation or knowledge of the originator of the record. Parents and children have a right to individual privacy and the right to know concerning information gathered by the school. If you wish to see your child's records, you may do so by making an appointment with the principal's office.

Personal Electronic Devices:

Per the Children's Internet Protection Act, the district employs filtering software designed to block harmful and inappropriate content; however, we are unable to monitor smartphone and personal electronic device (PED) use in the same manner. Ultimately, when it comes to the use of smartphones in the elementary setting, the risks outweigh any potential benefits, particularly when the school is well equipped with the tools (e.g., ChromeBooks, iPads, etc.) necessary for effective instructional technology integration.

We recognize that completely banning cell phones from school altogether would be problematic, so instead, we are requiring that students keep their phones (and PEDs) powered off and in their backpacks at all times. This way, you will still have the ability to communicate with your child before and after school.

If you have an urgent need to reach your child during school hours, please call the main office. Likewise, if your child needs to reach a parent/guardian, s/he will be permitted to use a school phone provided that there is an urgent need (e.g., forgotten lunch, wet clothing, etc.). However, please understand that in the interests of instilling the life skill of responsibility, forgotten assignments do not qualify as urgent.

Given the aforementioned expectations that PEDs will be powered off and remain in your child's backpack, the following consequences will be in effect for violations of these protocols:

Personal Electronic Devices (continued):

- **First Offense**
 - The PED will be confiscated and keep in the principal’s office until dismissal with a disciplinary warning report sent home to parents/guardians;
 - PED usage during dismissal will result in confiscation on the following school day with a disciplinary warning report sent home to parents/guardians;
- **Second Offense** – the PED will be confiscated and keep in the principal’s office until a parent/guardian is able to pick it up;
- **Third Offense** – constitutes “defiance of authority” and will result in a suspension of PED privileges for a period of 30 calendar days.

Disclaimer: Bringing a PED to school is at the parents’/guardians’ own risk. The school and district are not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged smartphones or PEDs.

Breakfast and Lunch:

The kitchen serves a complete cold breakfast and hot lunch program; however, students may certainly bring a lunch from home. Milk and snacks may be purchased separately. If your child has forgotten his/her lunch, they may charge one. *It is important that s/he repay the charge on the next school day.*

Celebrations:

Throughout the school year, classes have opportunities to celebrate various occasions. However, class festivities are limited to the following events:

- Halloween parade and parties,
- Winter celebrations, and
- End-of-year celebrations.

Celebrations (continued):

Researchers estimate that up to **15 million** Americans have food allergies. This potentially deadly disease affects 1 in every 13 children (under **18** years of age) in the United States. That's roughly **two** in every classroom. And it's critical to note that these statistics would suggest that there are many children with food allergies who have yet to be diagnosed.

On a related note, we are bound by federal and state guidelines and district policy, which prohibit us from allowing:

- foods of minimal nutritional value as defined by U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations;
- all food and beverage items listing sugar, in any form, as the first ingredient; and
- all forms of candy.

Consequently, in response to the need to keep all of our children safe and remain in compliance with state and federal regulations, Woodcrest has taken the progressive stance of not allowing candy or food to come in for birthdays and holidays.

While formal birthday parties are not held, to ensure the safety of students with food-related allergies, special *non-edible* treats for your child's birthday may be brought into school.

To avoid hurt feelings and the resulting distractions from the education process, invitations to birthday parties may not be distributed in school.

General Safety:

A Safety Committee—which includes a parent representative—meets on a regular basis to discuss security and safety issues. Any staff member, student or parent is invited and encouraged to bring concerns to our attention.

Visitors:

As mentioned above, parents are always welcome to visit Woodcrest, but as a matter of courtesy, the classroom teacher should be notified in advance. All Woodcrest visitors must register in the main for all school business, including the delivery of items, when picking your child up early and to see a staff member.

Consistent with all schools in the district, we require all parents/guardians/family members present photo identification and the student identification number of their child prior to being admitted to our school.

All other visitors, including alumni, must establish an appointment prior to arriving at Woodcrest and will be required to present photo identification to be admitted to our school.

Once checked in, we ask that you wear visitor's pass lanyard at all times while in the building so that our students and staff know that you have been "cleared" by the main office.

Emergency Telephone Numbers:

It is essential for your child's health and safety that the school has a local telephone number of someone who is to be contacted, and who is available to pick up your child, in the event of illness, injury, or an emergency early dismissal. Parents/guardians are reminded that if at any time they change their home, work, or emergency phone numbers or contacts, the school nurse and main office should be notified immediately.

Emergency Drills:

There will be two emergency drills conducted per month as required by state statute; one fire drill and one school security drill (evacuations, lockdowns, etc.). The purpose of all drills is to regularly practice emergency protocols so they become second nature to both our staff and students. In all cases, the nature of the drill will be tactfully and sensitively discussed with the children, in age-appropriate terms, prior to each drill.

Parent Information/Communication:

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

The educational welfare of our children is best served when there is mutual understanding and cooperation between the home and school. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice during the school year—once in the fall and again in the spring. Additional conferences may be initiated, as needed, by parents or teachers throughout the year. If you think your child is having a problem or you have a concern about his or her progress, please do not wait for the regularly scheduled conferences—call your child’s teacher or the school counselor as soon as possible. Parents are urged to utilize parent conferences to establish an active communication that will assist in the progress of their child.

SHARK SENTINEL

The Shark Sentinel is our monthly newsletter. Please watch for it each month; it will be sent home the first Wednesday of each month. We will also post electronic copies online.

WEEKLY WEDNESDAY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION FOLDER

The school and the PTA will communicate with parents regularly by sending electronic notices home via an email link. Although some notices are “time sensitive,” and in rare cases, emergencies, the majority of school-to-home communication will arrive via the Wednesday electronic folder.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The mission of the Woodcrest PTA is to enhance and enrich our children’s academic experience by inspiring parents and teachers to work together to build a strong school community. Parental involvement is critical to a child’s success in school, and we encourage all parents to show their support for their children by getting involved in the PTA. While many PTA programs require parental participation during school hours, there are many committees and activities that support the children, the school and the PTA that are flexible and can be managed after hours, at your convenience, and do not require parental involvement during the school day. We want every child at Woodcrest to have the opportunity to benefit from a sense a pride in his/her parents’/guardians’ involvement in the school, and we have plenty of opportunities for parents to show their support. Please join us as we work together for the benefit of our children.

Website and Social Media:

The Cherry Hill Public School District and each of its schools have recently introduced a new web presence that boasts extensive resources that can be accessed at www.chclc.org. We encourage you to visit often to review *Shark Sentinel*, our monthly newsletter, as well as information about our students and staff. Additionally, the school website provides a dynamic calendar of events, so please be sure to come back often.

As another mode of communication, Woodcrest Elementary School maintains a presence on Twitter and Pinterest. Links are provided on the school's homepage.