

# West Towson Elementary School

## ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL/VISITATION PROCEDURES 2018-2019

### ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

West Towson Elementary School's doors open for children at 9:05 a.m. each morning. Supervision of students is not provided before this time. Students arriving to school before 9:05 a.m. must wait outside without school staff supervision. If daycare coverage is needed for children before school, parents may consider enrolling them in Play Centers, the private daycare facility housed in the West Towson's cafeteria. For further information regarding Play Centers, please call 410-296-4880 or 410-296-0803.

#### **Bus Riders**

During arrival times, the driveway in the front of the building is reserved for use by buses only. Bus arrival time varies according to the weather and traffic congestion. Cars should not enter or park in the bus loop in front of the school between 8:45 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Students transported to school on buses usually begin arriving at approximately 9:05 a.m. If buses arrive prior to 9:05 a.m., the children will remain on the buses until the school doors open. The buses drop off students in front of the school building, near the front door. Staff members carefully monitor the arrival of students transported by buses. Please note that in the beginning of the school year bus pick-up schedules may vary until the routes become routine.

#### **Walkers**

The only children who will walk to school at West Towson live in the Ruxton Ridge community. The students will use the walkway leading to Ridge Ruxton School's side parking lot. They will cross West Towson's back driveway using the crosswalks. They will then follow the sidewalk to the front of Ridge Ruxton School and enter West Towson's front door. Adult supervision will be provided at the crosswalk between 9:05 a.m. and 9:18 a.m. Parents who walk their children to school are asked to say their "goodbyes" and drop off their children in front of the school each morning. Allowing children to walk to class independently, with the help of our safeties and staff, will enhance the children's confidence and independence.

#### **Carpool Riders**

All West Towson students are provided with bus service to and from school, with the exception of the children walking from the Ruxton Ridge community. To support WTES's focus on environmentally responsible living, parents are encouraged to avoid transporting their children to and from school by car. In addition to the environmental issues, the size of the school campus does not support a large carpool line. However, recognizing that there are circumstances which result in the need for parents to transport their children to or from school, a set of carpool procedures has been developed.

In the morning, after entering the school campus from Charles Street, drivers should turn right into the parking area down the hill from the Ridge Ruxton School as they currently do. Instead of stopping at the intersection of the driveway in front of Ridge Ruxton, drivers will drive around the back of Ridge Ruxton to the turnaround area behind West Towson. Staff members will be on hand to open doors and monitor the children as they enter the building through a hallway next to the gym. The children should be ready to exit their cars on the curb side when the drivers pull up, after brief, final good-byes. Children should not exit until staff members move over to their cars. Drivers will then loop back to the driveway behind Ridge Ruxton, turn in front of Ridge Ruxton, and exit the campus by turning left before entering the West Towson bus loop as was done in the past. It is important that drivers follow these guidelines and drive in a slow, safe, and considerate manner. Adult supervision is provided at the carpool drop-off area between 9:05 a.m. and 9:18 a.m.

The children walking between West Towson and the sidewalk beside Ridge Ruxton leading to their neighborhood will cross the driveway assisted by a staff member. The children and teacher have the right of way and will cross at the crosswalk.

**Students should not be dropped off in the parking area in front of West Towson**, as children would need to cross the bus loop during bus arrival. This scenario presents a potential for high risk due to the high volume of activity and limited bus driver visibility.

There are times when parents may need to accompany their children into school in the morning to assist with the delivery of projects or to speak with support staff. These parents will need to park their cars in the parking lot (not in a handicapped spot) and check in with the office. Caution should be taken when crossing the bus loop.

### **Instructional Day**

The instructional day at West Towson Elementary School begins when the children arrive in their classrooms, no later than 9:20 a.m. Children arriving in their classrooms after 9:20 a.m. will be marked tardy. Students arriving late to class on a consistent basis will be unable to fully benefit from the important beginning of the school day transitional periods and activities provided by their teachers.

### **Kindergarten**

Kindergarten students will follow a gradual entry schedule for the first few days of school. The schedule will be shared with parents in the summer mailing. Once the kindergarten students attend school full-time, they may access bus service. For the first several weeks of school, the kindergarteners will be escorted by adults from their buses to meet their teachers in the rotunda. Kindergarten teachers will walk their students to the classrooms. Once the kindergarten children become familiar with the school and West Towson's arrival routines, they will be able to walk from the bus to their classrooms after 9:05 a.m. without adult escorts. All kindergarten classrooms are on the main entrance level of the school.

## **DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

The safety of all students is a priority at West Towson. To ensure that the children arrive home safely in the manner which each family intends, it is critical that the school have each child's dismissal plans in writing. These plans are held in the office, and the school will follow the plans on file unless informed by parents of changes, in writing.

### **Play Centers (After School Care)**

Children attending the after school care program will be dismissed following afternoon announcements at 3:50 p.m.

### **Carpool Riders**

Car riders will be dismissed following announcements at 3:50 p.m. These students will leave their classrooms and walk to the hallway outside of the cafeteria. After being checked in, they will exit through the gym to reach the carpool pick-up area. At the beginning of the year a staff member will accompany the kindergarten students to the carpool line to ensure their safe arrival. Staff members carefully supervise the car rider pick-up area at all times. Pick-up procedures are similar to those explained above for morning drop-off. After entering the school campus from Charles Street, drivers should turn right into the parking area down the hill from the Ridge Ruxton School and drive around the back of Ridge Ruxton to the turn-around area behind West Towson. Once the West Towson staff members assigned to afternoon carpool duty arrive with the students behind the school, they will assist the children meeting their rides. Students will wait on the sidewalk until their cars arrive. When the weather is bad the children will wait in the hallway. Drivers are asked to arrange for children to enter their cars on the passenger side. This avoids the need for children to walk into traffic. Once again, drivers are reminded to drive in a slow, cautious manner while on school grounds, allowing buses and people crossing the driveway to have the right of way. Parents collecting their children in the carpool line may not leave their cars while waiting in line. Students may not leave the carpool waiting area to meet drivers who have parked their cars or are waiting in line.

The children walking between West Towson and the sidewalk beside Ridge Ruxton leading to their neighborhood will cross the driveway assisted by a staff member. The children and teacher have the right of way and will cross at the crosswalk.

### **Bus Riders**

Students traveling home on buses will be called by buses to the rotunda beginning at approximately 3:55 p.m. All students will line up according to their bus color and be escorted outside and onto the buses by staff members. At the beginning of the year, a staff member will accompany kindergarten children to this area to ensure their safe arrival in the bus lines. The Department of Transportation will not permit children to ride on buses to which they are not assigned on a daily basis.

### **Walkers**

Each afternoon, walkers will be escorted across the Ridge Ruxton driveway to the sidewalk leading to the Ruxton Ridge community. Dismissal of walkers takes place following the 3:50 p.m. announcements.

### **Early Dismissal**

For the safety of all students, parents/guardians must come directly to the school office to sign out their children for early dismissal. Office personnel will request identification, and if the adult is authorized to take the child, office staff will call the child to the office. (Children will not be called to the office prior to the arrival of the parent/guardian.) Under no circumstances are parents to remove children from school without following these procedures.

Parents who are volunteering at the school or are at the school for other reasons should not take their children directly from the classroom. They must come to the office and follow the appropriate procedures to ensure that staff members are aware of the dismissal and that the dismissal of the child is recorded.

Children will not be released to people other than those listed on the Student Contact Information form without written parent permission. Children may be released to the designated emergency contact on the child's *Student Contact Information* form. Early dismissal should occur only in unavoidable situations. Doctor/dentist appointments, etc. should be scheduled after regular school hours whenever possible to minimize the loss of instructional time.

Dismissal times at West Towson are extremely busy. **In order to avoid confusion during dismissal time, parents are asked to refrain from picking up students from the office between 3:35 p.m. and 3:55 p.m.** End of the day interruptions interfere with the safe, efficient, and accurate end-of-the-day transition activities.

Parents arriving before dismissal to have their children dismissed early will need to report to the office, request that their children be pulled from class, and sign their children out as directed by the office staff. Parents are asked to notify the school or teacher in written form no later than the morning of the day their children need to be dismissed before the end of the day.

In the event of an unexpected need for early dismissal, please do not email teachers or office staff. Instead, please call the school office as soon as possible to ensure the notice is received and your child and staff have ample time to make the change to the dismissal plan.

### **Changes to Dismissal Plans**

West Towson Elementary School will be responsible for dismissing children according to the information that parents record on their children's transportation forms. All changes in dismissal must be communicated to the school office **in writing**. Parents are asked to assist with dismissal procedures by making certain that children are clear about dismissal plans before they enter school each morning. Last minute changes in plans are often confusing to children. All changes in transportation plans must be put in writing and sent by written note or email to the children's teachers, and office staff, by no later than the morning of the change. Including the office staff in the email is important in the event that the teacher is absent. Adjustments in transportation will not be made without written approval from parents. End of the day phone calls to the office to change your children's dismissal plans create many problems for the school. These calls should be limited to emergencies only. When numerous calls are made to the office near the end of the school day, it is difficult for the office to honor these requests. Parents will be asked to fax a signed note or a copy of the *Dismissal Change Form* if the change is made at the end of the school day. All dismissal changes need to be completed by 3:20 p.m. in order for the office staff to reach the children affected by the changes before the end of the school day. A *Dismissal Change Form* is provided at the end of this packet. It is recommended that parents copy this form and keep blank copies at home to use throughout the year as needed. Completed forms need to be sent to school with children whenever there are changes in dismissal plans. Additional copies are available in the school office. Again, to ensure that all children arrive home safely, families need to take time to carefully plan dismissal arrangements and communicate them clearly to your children and to the school.

Please review these arrival and dismissal procedures with your children. The procedures have been designed to ensure the safety of all students at our school. Your patience, courtesy, and willingness to work with the school will assist us in well-organized and safe dismissals. Please contact Mrs. Hershfeld at 410-887-3869 if you have any questions or concerns regarding these procedures.

Once again, your assistance and cooperation is greatly appreciated as we work together to ensure the safety of the West Towson Elementary School community.

## VISITORS

All parents and other visitors entering the school must report to the office and sign in. Visitors will be asked to identify themselves and the purpose of their visit when entering the building. When parents or other visitors enter the school for the first time, they will be asked to present a government-issued photo ID or driver's license to a staff member in the school office. The ID will be scanned and the following information will be collected: photo, name, and date of birth. This information will be used to check in the visitor, create an ID badge, and compare the visitor's information against sexual offender databases throughout the country. If the visitor's name appears on any of the lists or if the visitor refuses to allow the school to scan their ID, the visitor will not be allowed access to the school. Once visitors have their IDs initially scanned, the system will recognize their information and the check in process will be brief.

Once a visitor has been given a visitor's badge they may fulfill the purpose of the visit as it was described to the office secretary. If a visitor would like to change the purpose of their visit, he or she must report back to the office to clear the desired change in plans. It is critical for the safety and security of our students that visitors report directly to the location intended for their visit and then report to the office to sign out when they are finished.

Visitors who have not been volunteer trained are not authorized to engage with children who are not their own. Therefore, visitors who are observing in classrooms should not participate in classroom activities with their child's classmates. We strongly encourage that **all** parents, guardians, and grandparents complete volunteer training at the beginning of each school year to allow for full participation in special events in their children's classrooms. Directions for completing the volunteer application/training process are in the Volunteer section of the Parent Handbook.

Staff members, volunteers, and substitutes will also be given badges. Anyone in the school building without a badge should expect to be approached and questioned. These guidelines are designed to assist us in providing a safe and orderly school environment. West Towson strongly encourages parent involvement and participation in the school and our program. These new measures are intended to ensure the safety and security of the school community, not to limit parent involvement in our school.

Staff members have requested that parents not visit classrooms in the morning after 9:05 a.m. Students begin working on transitional tasks upon their arrival in the homerooms each morning, and teachers are needed to assist them in their morning activities. If a parent needs to speak with a teacher, it is important that the parent leave a note with one of the secretaries, and the message will be delivered to the teacher. Our teachers' first priority must be to their students.

Visitors to the school may not visit or eat with students in the cafeteria during lunch. Seating in the cafeteria is limited and students must have the space required to facilitate the lunch period.

---

## WTES Dismissal Change Form

**Please make copies as needed**

Your Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Child's Homeroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date that the change will take place: \_\_\_\_\_

\*My child will have an early dismissal \_\_\_\_\_ am \_\_\_\_\_ pm

\*The means by which you want to have your child travel home after school (Circle one)

Carpool      Walker      Bus      (# \_\_\_\_\_ Color \_\_\_\_\_)

If child is traveling by carpool, write the name of the driver in the space provided below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_