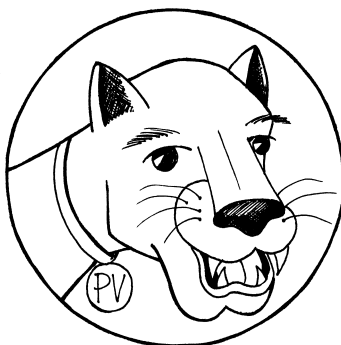


Lower Merion School District
Penn Valley
Elementary School
Panthers



Parent / Student Handbook

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Student's Name: _____

Grade/Homeroom: _____

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Principal's Welcome

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

We are thrilled to embark on a new adventure with you for the 2009-2010 school year! We have spent the summer preparing the building, the grounds and the classrooms for your arrival. The floors have been waxed, the furniture arranged and the classrooms organized...now we need the vital ingredient...the students! Welcome back!

The purpose of this handbook is to communicate our school expectations, practices, routines and procedures so we can continue to provide the children with a first class educational experience.

The Lower Merion School District provides each family with a district calendar. This calendar provides the dates and times of school and district based activities. The calendar also identifies holidays, early dismissal dates, and student days off for teacher in-services.

The Home and School Association produces a yearly student directory. This directory can be obtained by paying very modest Home and School Association dues. The directory is a useful source of information. In it you'll find student names, addresses, telephone numbers, staff pictures and other Home and School information.

Every Thursday, each student brings home a folder containing announcements from the school and Home & School Association. Parents/guardians are asked to look through the folder in a timely manner each week and to sign and return the folder to the children's classroom teacher the following day. News and announcements about the school are also broadcasted on the district's cable access station, Channel 6 and may be posted on the school's and district's web page.

If a parent/guardian has a concern about their child's progress or day to day life at school, they should make an appointment with their child's teacher to discuss the concerns. Although classroom instruction cannot be interrupted for telephone calls, school personnel attempt to respond to messages/voice mail as soon as possible. Every staff member has an LMSD voice mail extension available on our web page.

No form of communication replaces the personal interaction between parents and teachers. In order to accomplish this, we rely on mutually respectful, candid, and timely dialogue.

The insert accompanying this handbook is a verification of your receipt and review of this handbook. We ask that you review and discuss the contents of this handbook with your child(ren) before signing the accompanying page.

I look forward to meeting and working with all of you as we begin another exciting school year at Penn Valley Elementary School. Together we can ensure your child's academic, emotional, and social success.

Sincerely,

Scott Mitchell, Principal

Mission Statement

Committed to excellence and continuous improvement, the Lower Merion School District strives to ensure that all students achieve their highest level of critical thinking and creativity, that they value themselves and the diversity of others, and that they are knowledgeable, contributing citizens capable of excelling in a rapidly changing world.

This is accomplished by individuals engaging in innovative, active experiences tailored to myriad ways of learning and in partnership with our community.

Arrival & Dismissal Procedures

Arrival:

Students should not arrive to school before 8:50 AM. Adult supervision is not available before this time. The only exception being when children are participating in teacher or school sponsored activities. Students join their grade level peers in the main lobby or cafeteria until nine o'clock. At nine o'clock, teachers will dismiss students to their classrooms. The instructional day begins at 9:05 AM.

Dismissal:

The instructional day concludes at 3:35 PM. Students are accompanied by staff members to their assigned bus lines, Margo Lane for parent pickup, or MELC for after school care.

Every student residing in our attendance area is provided with school bus transportation. If you choose to drive your child to and from school, it is important to observe the following guidelines:

- Children may not be dropped off at school before 8:50 AM. Adult supervision is not available before this time.
- Parent Drop Off: Children may be safely dropped off at Margo Lane and can enter by way of this entrance until 9:05 AM. An adult will be present at this entrance between 8:50 and 9:05. Only students are permitted to enter the school through this door. Parents/Guardians must enter the building through the front doors and report immediately to the main office and sign in.
- Parent Pick Up: Children being picked up are supervised at dismissal by the door located on the Margo Lane side of the school. Children not picked up by 3:40 p.m. are escorted to the main office where they will wait for their parent/guardian to arrive.

The Faculty Parking lot located on Margo Lane is not a safe or appropriate drop off/pick up area.

Attendance Procedures

Reporting Student Absence:

Parents/guardians are asked to notify the school office on or before the day of a child's absence by calling 610-645-1403. Each time a child is absent and has not been called out, the office staff must make direct contact with the family to ensure the child's safety. If a parent/guardian is not contacted via the home number, cell phones are called and then emergency contacts are called until direct contact is made. As you can imagine, this is a time consuming task.

Returning from an Absence:

Upon returning from an absence, a written statement providing the reason for the absence must be provided to the classroom teacher. For your convenience, we provide a form you can use to record your child's absence. Additional copies are available in the office. Without an absence note, absences will be recorded as "unexcused" in accordance with state guidelines. "Excused" absences include illness, family emergency and death of a family member. All other explanations are categorized as "unexcused".

Student Absence from School Not Related to Illness or Emergencies:

A child's daily attendance to school is critical to their academic achievement. Vacations taken during instructional days interfere with a child's attendance and performance and are thus discouraged. Absences which exceed five school days must be approved by the Superintendent of schools. A formal request must be filed with the building principal two weeks in advance of the scheduled vacation.

Student Lateness: The instructional day begins at 9:05 a.m. Any student arriving to school after this time is marked late. Children arriving to school after 9:05 a.m. are to report to the main office before going to class. This will assist us in making sure that all students are accounted for in the daily attendance count sent to the office.

Early Dismissal from School:

If an early dismissal is necessary, parents/guardians are asked to submit a note to the teacher before the early dismissal date noting when the child will be picked up and stating the reason for the request. Parents/guardians must report to the office to sign the student out. The office staff will notify the classroom teacher and the child will meet the parent in the office.

At the end of each year we recognize students with Perfect Attendance. The criteria for this award are no absences, lateness's or early dismissals.

Change of Address or Phone Number:

Parents/guardians should inform the school office immediately of any change of address, telephone number, or e-mail address. For a change of address, verification of the new address must be brought to the school office within 30 days. Delays in reporting these changes could result in delayed/missed contact and confusion during an emergency.

Child Study Team

The Child Study Team (comprised of the principal, guidance counselor, classroom teacher, Instructional Support teacher, school psychologist, speech & language teacher, and reading teachers) meet regularly throughout the school year. The team discusses various instructional strategies that can help teachers meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom. A member of the team is designated as the liaison with the parents throughout the process. The team reviews the outcomes of the implementation of strategies. Together with parents, the Child Study Team determines what steps are needed to plan for a child's individualized academic growth.

Civility Policy of the Lower Merion School District:

Purpose - The Lower Merion School District believes that all schools should be places where mutual respect is practiced and reinforced. This Policy is designed to promote an environment in which all members of the school community will be treated with respect and expect the same in return. We refer to this respect as civility.

Definition – The District has adopted as part of its strategic plan an objective to identify and model behaviors for the entire school community to become collaborative, respectful, and contributing citizens. The District's role is to establish and enhance an atmosphere where people are encouraged and expected to exhibit language, attitudes and behavior that foster sound educational practices and allow people to grow socially and academically.

This policy can be found in the Board Policy Handbook in our school library, main office and online at www.lmsd.org.

Civility is expected in verbal interactions, nonverbal interactions, and written communications between adults and students.

Penn Valley Code of Conduct

“The Penn Valley Way...Kind in what we do and say”

Penn Valley School is a warm and nurturing place for children to grow and learn. There are times, however, when we all need help coping with problems, frustration and sometimes anger. School should be a place where we all feel safe, both physically and emotionally.

One way to make sure we feel secure in school is to ensure that expectations are clear. “The Penn Valley Way” will help us continue to implement the social skills our children must learn not only through our words but also through our actions. Each fall, each classroom teacher helps their students develop their own classroom expectations.

All Penn Valley teachers and staff expect every student to:

- **exhibit respect for self and others.**
- **exhibit respect for school property and equipment.**
- **keep your hands and feet to yourself.**
- **model positive and appropriate behaviors.**

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Behavior

After disruptive or inappropriate behavior has been exhibited, one or more of the following consequences may be utilized:

- Contact parents/guardians
- Development and implementation of behavior plan
- Referral to the principal
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension

School Bus Expectations

- exhibit respect for self and others
- exhibit respect for school property and equipment
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- model positive and appropriate behaviors
- remained seated for the duration of the ride
- use regular speaking voices
- obey directives from drivers and other adults

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Conduct on School Bus

- Referral to principal
- Contact parents/guardians
- Assigned seats
- Suspension from bus
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension

Playground Expectations

- exhibit respect for self and others
- exhibit respect for school property and equipment
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- model positive and appropriate behaviors

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Conduct on Playground

- Referral to principal
- Contact parents/guardians
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension

Cafeteria Expectations

- use regular speaking voice
- use good table manners and clean our own area
- exhibit respect for self and others
- exhibit respect for school property and equipment
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- model positive and appropriate behaviors

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Conduct in the Cafeteria

- Referral to principal
- Contact parents/guardians
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension
- Shortened or loss of recess

Assembly Expectations

- enter and leave quietly
- treat presenters and neighbors kindly in word and action
- use regular speaking voice
- exhibit respect for self and others
- exhibit respect for school property and equipment
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- model positive and appropriate behaviors

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Conduct at the next Assembly

- Referral to principal
- Contact parents/guardians
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension
- Removal from auditorium
- Restriction in participation at next assembly

Hallway Expectations

- stay with class and adult
- keep to the right
- exhibit respect for self and others
- exhibit respect for school property and equipment
- keep your hands and feet to yourself
- model positive and appropriate behaviors

Possible Consequences for Inappropriate Conduct in the Hallway

- Referral to principal
- Contact parents/guardians
- Warnings issued
- Before and /or after school detention
- Lunch detention
- Recess detention
- Out of school suspension

Act 26

Act 26 amended the school code regarding students who bring weapons to school. As used in the school code, the term “weapon” shall include, but not limited to, any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, shotgun, rifle, and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

If a student is found with a weapon, the law is very specific: the principal must notify the superintendent and the local police. Normally, students found in possession of a weapon must be suspended from school for a year. It is important for all parents/guardians to be aware of the items children bring to school. Parents/guardians are encouraged to remind children to check their pockets/book bags so that inappropriate items are not accidentally brought to school.

Use of e-mail

Every staff member has an LMSD email address available on our web page. We ask that the following guidelines be observed when using this form of communication:

- Messages should be concise and to the point. If you need to set up an appointment with a staff member in order to discuss lengthy or confidential information, please send a message via e-mail with a phone number and a good time to reach you.
- E-mail is designed for convenience not immediacy. Staff members routinely check their e- mail before and after school. Important messages that must reach a staff member immediately are best sent through the office or via a written note. Alternative dismissal arrangements, emergency information and other timely information that must be received by the staff member the same day should not be sent electronically.
- We all try to be sensitive to the issue of confidentiality. References to other students, parents or staff members in an e-mail are not to be made. E-mail messages are not meant to replace direct communication with school staff.

Dress Code

Parents/guardians are asked to help us maintain a positive educational setting. The following guidelines will be observed:

- Students are not permitted to wear any article of clothing that advertises alcohol, drugs, or has objectionable language or depictions.
- Bare midriffs are not permitted for boys or girls. In addition, students are not to wear tops with spaghetti straps.
- Backless shoes, flip flops, and open toe sandals are not permitted as they pose a safety hazard to children.
- Students are not permitted to wear hats, hoods or sunglasses in the building.
- Additionally, the wearing of large or heavy neck medallions and hoop earrings pose safety issues in school and are discouraged from being worn.
- Shorts are permitted in warm weather. The bottom of the shorts must extend further than the extended fingers while arms are resting at one's sides.

Emergency Procedures

The district's and school's Emergency Plans are available on the school's web page. In order for our district Global connect Emergency system to be effective, Parents/Guardians are responsible to keep the school abreast of any changes in emergency contract information.

Gift Policy

The Lower Merion School District Board of Directors and the Lower Merion Education Association (the union representing teachers and support staff) requests that gifts not be given by students to employees of the Lower Merion School District.

Health Services

A registered nurse is available five days a week to provide services. Parents/guardians are encouraged to notify the nurse of any handicap or special health needs that may require accommodations at school. See "Medications" below for details about dispensing medication during school hours.

First Aid-Emergency Care: The nurse will provide first aid and emergency care for students who become ill or injured during the school day. If your child is too ill to remain in school, parents will be expected to make arrangements to pick up the student. Staff members are not permitted to transport students. In case of a serious illness or injury, an ambulance will be called to transport the student to the nearest hospital.

When to Keep Your Child at Home: It is important to maintain a healthy environment in the classroom to protect students. A child will be readmitted to school after 24-48 hours of appropriate therapy for the following conditions: strep throat, scarlet fever, impetigo, ringworm, pinworm, conjunctivitis (pink eye).

Chicken Pox: May return 6 days after appearance of the last crop of vesicles and vesicles are completely crusted.

Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Meningitis: Require a physician's note to return.

Fifth Disease: Children with fifth disease are not excluded from school however parent/guardian should notify school nurse.

Head Lice: Students may return when appropriately treated with a pediculocide.

Medications: Whenever possible, all medication required by students should be administered at home. School personnel may administer medication only when a physician's written order and parent's written permission are supplied. The medication in its original labeled container must be delivered by the parent/guardian to the principal or school nurse. Under no circumstances should medication be sent to school in a student's book bag. Medication authorization forms can be obtained from the school nurse.

Allergies to Insects/Food: Parents/guardians of students with known bee allergies or life threatening food allergies must alert the school nurse, provide necessary medication and have a physician complete a medication authorization form with instructions for emergency treatment.

Asthma Inhalers & EpiPens: Medication authorization forms must be completed and kept on file in the nurse's office. The physician should indicate on the form if the child may carry the medication and self administer. Self administration of medication is permitted for emergency medication only.

Home & School Association

The Penn Valley Home & School Association is an active participant in the life of our school community. Through its efforts, the Home & School Association enables teachers to extend the curriculum by supporting field trips, cultural programs, speakers and artists in residence. The Weekly Home & School Update is not only sent home in the Thursday envelope, but it is also available online (www.lmsd.org). We encourage every family to become a member of this important organization. Please visit the PV School Portfolio for additional information regarding the H S A.

Homework

Homework is an essential component of our instructional program. It is designed to reinforce, review and extend concepts learned at school. We ask that parents/guardians take an active role by providing each child with a quiet area in which to complete homework assignments and also by reviewing assignments with children. Please check with your child's teacher to see what supplies may be needed at home to complete homework assignments. We do ask that any assignment too difficult for a child to complete be brought to the attention of the teacher as this is an indication that the concept being reviewed at home may not have been fully understood.

Formal homework is introduced as students are considered ready to benefit from it. For young students in kindergarten the act of bringing materials and notes back and forth is an act that helps develop good homework habits. The amount of time needed for formal homework will vary from grade to grade; however, each child is asked to either read or be read to every evening for 20 minutes. Our teachers make every effort to be sensitive to holidays when assigning homework and projects.

Requesting Homework During an Absence:

- For a one day absence, homework will not be provided. All missed assignments will be completed upon return to school.
- For multiple day absences teachers will provide assignments upon request. We do need advance notice in order to ensure each teacher has time for the collection of materials. Any request for homework assignments should be made by 9:30 a.m. The office will ensure that your child's teacher receives this request.

Internet Access by Students

Our school district takes pride in ensuring that our students have access to information available on the Internet. Every parent/guardian receives a copy of our Acceptable Use Policy and a form that must be signed by parents and students acknowledging understanding of this policy. An account is set up for each student. Students access the Internet under the direction and supervision of teachers. This is a service and a privilege which will be revoked if misused.

Library Procedures/Policies

Our goal is to provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum. To foster a stimulating learning environment, the following policies have been put in place.

Borrowing Books

- Students in grades Kindergarten and First Grade: May borrow one book for two weeks.
- Students in Second Grade through Fifth Grade: May borrow two books for two weeks.

Reserving Books

- If a book is checked out to another student, the requesting student can fill out a reservation form at the circulation desk.
- Upon the return of the book, the student will be notified via the classroom teacher.
- The student must pick up the reserved book within a week of receiving the notice.
- If the book is not picked up within the given time, it will be returned to the shelf for circulation.

Overdue Books

The Monday after a book is due, the student will receive an overdue notice via the classroom teacher. After the book has been overdue for one month, a letter is sent home to the parent/guardian via US mail. If the student knows that the book is lost, a letter providing the replacement cost will be mailed home. We encourage them to do a thorough search both at home and at school. However, the student is responsible for the book and its replacement, if necessary.

Lost and Damaged Books

Books are carefully examined before check out and when they are returned. If the book is damaged while a student has it checked out, it will be noticed upon return. If a book is lost, a replacement of the exact title and binding of the book or an acceptable replacement may be requested **OR** the purchase price of the book.

A damaged book is:

- any water-damaged book
- any book that is scribbled and written in, or on, in any way.
- any book with pages that have been torn out.
 - *The student must bring it to the attention of the librarian who will determine whether it is reparable or not.*
- when the binding breaks or separates from the book cover.
 - *The student must bring it to the attention of the librarian who will determine whether it can rebound.*

Note: Students are encouraged to put their books in a safe place after they borrow them from the library. They should never put a library book in their school bag with water bottles or left out where a younger child or pet can get a hold of it.

Lost & Found Items

The “Lost and Found” is located in the cafeteria. Students should check this area if they lose a personal item. Unclaimed items are periodically collected and donated to an appropriate charitable organization.

Materials/Textbooks

All students are supplied with necessary textbooks and workbooks. In addition, school supply lists are posted on our web page. We do expect children to appreciate and respect the value of their school supplies and texts. Failure to replace damaged or lost textbooks and/or library books can lead to restricted access to the library and/or delay in the issue of report cards.

Nutritional Services

Our school district offers breakfast and lunch services. Students have the option of bringing a lunch from home, supplementing a bag lunch or buying a complete meal. A menu is sent home at the beginning of each month or may be found on the district web site. The Nutritional Service Department has implemented a computerized debit system. This system allows you to prepay for meals as you wish. This system is designed to be a convenience for the parent, student and district. Your child will feel more at ease because of the confidentiality and they won't need to carry cash on a daily basis. An added feature that you may take advantage of is the Individual Participation Report so you may view what your child is eating for lunch and keep track of their balance. You may also go online to www.myschoolaccount.com to view your child's account and add money with credit card or check card.

Free and reduced priced lunches are available to those who qualify. All students receive information and forms for this program on the first day of school. Parents/Guardians are responsible for supplying lunch money or a bagged lunch until a letter of approval for this program is received. Regular lunch fees apply until approved.

Recess

Children go outside for recess everyday unless there is precipitation or extreme cold. Supervision is provided by staff members. Children should dress appropriately for winter with hats, gloves, and boots, if there is snow on the ground. Recess equipment is provided for all students. If conditions are poor, recess is conducted in the classroom with adult supervision provided by teachers and other staff members.

Report Cards

Report Cards are issued three times a year. Parents/guardians will receive appointments to attend a conference in the fall and early spring one month in advance of each conference. Additionally, teachers are available to meet with parents/guardians to discuss concerns or questions about a student's progress. Throughout the year, you are welcome to call the school office in order to set up an additional appointment if needed.

Security

Access to the school: Throughout the school day, all exterior doors remain closed and locked. No visitor is permitted to enter the school through any door other than the main door. Neither staff nor students are permitted to open any exterior door for visitors. We appreciate your support of the strict enforcement of this policy. Please access the building through the front doors.

Snow Days and Late Openings:

Notice of school closing due to weather or other problems is given on the following radio stations, using the School Code 302 for Lower Merion School District: WCAU-AM (1210); KYW-AM (1060); WPEN-AM (950) and WIP-AM (510). It is also posted on the Lower Merion School District cable access station, Channel 6 and on the district's web site (www.lmsd.org). Please do not call the school for closing information. Occasionally, the school may open late (usually two hours). Buses will run late during late openings, with times adjusted (for example, if a child's bus usually arrives at 8:30 a.m., with a two hour delay opening, the bus can be expected around 10:30 a.m.). During late openings all before school activities and morning kindergarten sessions are cancelled. The afternoon session will begin at its normal time on these days.

Student Personal Property:

Electronic devices are not permitted in school or on busses.

Students are not permitted to bring play items to school. This includes sports equipment of any type. Pets are not permitted on school property. As likeable as our pets are, there are many children with allergies for whom exposure to pets could have dire consequences.

Transportation of Students

Students are picked up by the district's school buses at designated stops prior to 8:55 a.m. and returned to the same spot after 3:35 p.m. Children should be at their bus stops five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. If a child does not arrive home on the bus within five minutes of the expected time, the transportation office should be contacted (610-645-1940) directly, not the school office.

Request to ride an unassigned bus: Students are not permitted to ride another bus or to disembark at any stop other than their assigned bus top. In case of an anticipated child care issue, the parent/guardian must submit a written request to the principal.

Adults on School Buses: Riding of school buses is restricted to students and school personnel. The only exception to this policy is during field trips when parents/guardians act as chaperones. During these occasions, parents/guardians board the buses at the school with the students and staff. Additional information regarding transportation routines and policies is available in the district calendar and the Board Policy Handbook.

Visitors:

In November, during American Education Week, time is set aside specifically for classroom visitation during the school day. A parent/guardian wishing to visit the school at any other time during the school year should observe these guidelines:

- All persons visiting the school must first come to the office to sign in and get a visitor's pass. There are no exceptions.
- Siblings are not permitted to accompany visitors.
- Visitors should not attempt to communicate with the teacher or students during a classroom visit. Cell phones and beepers must be turned off.

If parents find it necessary to deliver articles to a child, these should be labeled and brought to the main office. The staff in the office will notify the child at a time that does not disrupt classroom instruction.