

# WHITE OAK SCHOOL

PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

2010 - 2011 School Year

## **The School's Purpose**

The White Oak School is specifically designed to serve students with dyslexia and similar language-based specific learning disabilities. The students are emotionally sound, and are of average to above-average intellectual capability. White Oak students are motivated to learn, and are committed to spending the time needed to bring their skills up to their potential.

The goal of the school is to develop in the students the language, literacy and study skills they need in order to return to a regular academic program. It is also the school's goal that each student should develop knowledge, confidence and a spirit of inquiry in the areas of social studies, the sciences, mathematics, physical education, and the arts.

## **Introduction**

A school community, by its nature, gathers together a group of people dedicated to a common purpose. White Oak has a set of rules so that we can be a community of caring, considerate, responsible individuals who can grow in our understanding of and respect for one another, while maintaining a level of consistency and fairness among ourselves as a group.

Most of the guidelines in this handbook are simple, logical rules, the sort of laws that govern small units in society -- be they families, schools or other kinds of small communities. Because they are sensible, they will probably seem obvious, and thus easy to follow. It is hoped that in a short time you will find them becoming second nature to you, requiring no special consideration or thought to comply with them.

*When you have read the handbook, please sign the signature page included in the registration packet at the back of the booklet, to indicate that you have read and understood the Handbook. Return the signed page with other required medical and registration documents. Registration is not complete until all required documents have been submitted.*

## **General Behavior**

A good rule to follow in regard to one's behavior toward others is to treat those around you in a manner in which you would choose to be treated: with mutual respect, honesty, concern and consideration. Behavior which is loud, rude, cruel or hurtful is unacceptable for White Oak students, whether they are on campus or out in the larger community representing the school. It is important to remember that each member of

the school community is a part of its identity and an ambassador for the school in the world at large. With that in mind, a White Oak student should understand that it is expected that he/she will always behave in a manner that is sensitive, caring and honorable, thereby reflecting well upon both the student and the school.

## **Dress Code**

The White Oak School dress code is designed to help cultivate in students an appreciation for attire which is appropriate and acceptable for an academic setting such as ours. The following guidelines provide a concise, overall structure which all students are expected to follow. Recognizing that fashions for girls and women far outnumber fashions for boys and men, the Dean of Students will meet with the girls in the opening weeks of the school year to provide and review details of the girls dress code guidelines.

Appropriate school attire for boys at White Oak is a collared shirt and long pants. Shirt tails must be kept tucked in at all times. Blue jeans, whether new, faded or "stonewashed," are not permitted; white, black or other colored jeans are acceptable. Sweat pants, wind pants, and similar athletic wear are not permitted except during physical education. Classroom attire for girls can be either a skirt and a blouse, slacks, or a dress.

T-shirts are not appropriate wear for either boys or girls. While women's fashions include many acceptable collar-less tops, the school requires that girls not substitute T-shirts for more appropriate wear.

Sneakers and athletic shoes are not appropriate classroom footwear, although students may bring them for gym and recreational wear. The school recognizes that many shoes are "transitional" in style, somewhere between traditional shoes and traditional sneakers; appropriate footwear for school should not resemble a sports-shoe. For safety reasons, shoes may not be open-toed. Boys should wear socks and a belt.

Hats, baseball caps, bandannas, beepers, telephones, personal stereos, headphones and sunglasses may not be worn in school, nor may ripped or torn clothing.

Vests, fleece pullovers, sweaters and sweatshirts may be worn inside, if they are worn over an appropriate shirt or top. "Outdoor clothing," such as coats, raincoats, hoods, hats, etc. may not be worn inside the school buildings.

The school discourages the wearing of earrings by boys. If an earring is worn, it must be a simple post-type; loops, wires, symbols or images may not be worn.

Please note that, apart from earrings, the school prohibits the on-campus wearing of all other oral or facial piercing-jewelry, for all students.

Students should, at all times, have a neat, clean appearance; shirt tails must be tucked in at all times. Extreme hairstyles and unnatural hair coloring are not permitted. No dress code can anticipate the many variations of student dress; working within the guidelines described above, the Headmaster or Dean will resolve any questions about the appropriateness of any specific article or general category of clothing.

## **Girls Dress Code Guidelines**

White Oak School recognizes that fashions for girls and women far outnumber fashions for boys and men. Through its dress code guidelines for girls, White Oak seeks to outline expectations which in many ways conform to the expectations placed upon boys, and which help foster in girls an appreciation for attire that is appropriate and acceptable for an academic setting such as ours.

	<b><u>O.K.</u></b>	<b><u>NOT O.K.</u></b>
<b><u>Shoes</u></b>	Most styles of women's and girls' shoes	Sneakers Open-toed shoes
<b><u>Pants/Slacks</u></b>	Full length pants 3/4 pants Bib-overalls (not blue denim) leggings (leggings of form-fitting material are to be covered by a top or over shirt that comes to mid-thigh.) culottes, as long as they conform to length requirements for skirts,	Nylon wind suit/ wind pants blue jeans/blue "jeggings" skorts sweats shorts (except after Memorial Day)
<b><u>Skirts (and shorts after Memorial Day)</u></b>	The hem of skirt (or shorts) is to no higher than 2 inches above the kneecap.	Denim skirts
<b><u>Shirts/Blouses</u></b>	Collared shirts, conventional stand-up collar, boat-neck scallop-neck, jewel-collar, turtleneck and mock-	T-shirts, Tank or string-top, unless covered by sweater or another top shirt which is to be buttoned up $\frac{3}{4}$ of

turtleneck.  
Please ask about other collars.

the way.  
Henleys, unless covered  
by a top shirt. No exposed  
midriff between blouse and  
slacks/skirt

**O.K.**

**NOT O.K.**

**Sweaters/Tops**

V-neck or Crew-neck sweater  
**\*Sweatshirts - may be worn by  
(both boys and) girls provided  
an appropriate stand-up  
collared shirt is worn and  
visible underneath.**

any inappropriate image or  
message (see note below)  
**\*Hooded Sweatshirts  
\* Demin Jackets**

**Tucking**

Generally, shirts must be tucked  
in if worn with pants or a skirt, but  
not if worn with leggings.

**Torn or ripped clothing**

Large, oversized, or normal shirts  
must be tucked in, unless clearly  
“overshirts” which must be  
buttoned  
3/4 of the way up Please ask for  
assistance if unsure.

Fitted shirts untucked.  
It is acceptable to wear fitted  
shirts untucked, unless under a  
sweater or top.

**Note:** Inappropriate is defined as any image or message that promotes, advertises or represents prohibited materials, including, but not limited to, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, firearms and other weaponry. Tops may also not display any image or message that is lewd, offensive or demeaning. All determinations of acceptability are made by the Dean of Students and/or the Headmaster.

**Mr. Drake; Mr. McGovern; Ms. Coleman; Ms. Edgerly; Ms. Michalski  
Modified 8/2010**

## Absence and Academic Credit

Academic achievement and good school attendance are closely linked. A student who misses class often spends days catching up, even with lots of individual help from the teacher.

The school is understanding of absences caused by legitimate medical reasons, or by family emergency or loss. Absences caused by any other reason, even for a day, burden a child with needless loss of important educational opportunities.

It is the school's policy to withhold credit if there are more than nine (9) absences in a particular semester, even if the absences are medically excused. This figure represents an absence rate of 10%, and is the equivalent of missing almost two full weeks of class in one semester. Final decision regarding the awarding of credit will be made by the Academic Affairs Committee, consisting of the Headmaster, the Dean of Students, and the Academic Dean.

Students will be considered to have missed one-half day of school if they have missed three or fewer periods of class. Students will be considered to have missed a full day of school if they miss four or more classes on that day.

## Daily Class Schedule

The daily class schedule at the White Oak School is as follows:

Period 1	8:42 - 9:32
Period 2	9:34 - 10:24
Break	10:24 - 10:44
Period 3	10:45 - 11:35
Period 4	11:37 - 12:27
Lunch	12:56 - 12:50
Period 5	12:50 - 1:46
Period 6	1:48 - 2:38
Period 7	2:40 - 3:30

Students should plan on arriving at school by 8:15 a.m. and should be picked up no later than 4:00 p.m.

## Personal/Cell Phones

Cell phone use by students during the school day is prohibited. Students who possess cell phones must turn them off fully (that is, not simply on to “vibrate”) upon arrival at school and the phone must remain off until the end of school. Any use or open possession of a cell phone will result in the confiscation of the phone upon the first offense. Subsequent offenses will result in confiscation until the student’s parents can pick the phone up from the Headmaster.

Students may always call home from designated phones in the school offices if there is a need to do so. Likewise, parents may call the school and ask to speak with their child if there is an emergency

*A note especially for parents:*

Despite the school’s cell phone policy, some students neglect to turn their phones off completely. For this reason, it is imperative that parents and family should not phone or text students during the school day. Such calls are disruptive and intrusive, not only for the student but for other students as well.

If you need to leave a note for your child, White Oak office personnel would be happy to make sure your child has been given that information. Please call either the Main Office or the Student Services office and we will convey your message.

## Lunch

The school provides a hot lunch program that is available to all students for a modest charge. Students may also bring their own lunch and, if desired, purchase milk at school. Questions concerning free or reduced-price lunches may be addressed to the school’s Business Manager.

Students bringing their own lunches should be aware that the school does not provide refrigeration or reheating facilities. The school specifically prohibits carbonated soft-drinks, but does allow students to bring juice, water, or “sport-drink” type beverages. Candy should not be brought to school. Students are encouraged to bring a nutritious snack for the mid-morning break or they may buy snacks at the cafeteria.

## Homework policies

Daily homework assignments are an integral part of the educational process at White Oak. The teacher's goal is to give useful homework that is matched to the student both in terms of quantity and complexity; consequently, it is expected that students will complete all homework assignments. Should a student arrive in class with homework that is not done, he or she may be asked to stay after school at day's end to finish or make up the work in question. *Please note that this is not considered to be a disciplinary procedure, but rather an effort to insure that a student is not impeding his/her progress by a lack of understanding or attention to the work involved. Parental assistance with homework should only be in the realm of clarification, organization, and encouragement, without substantial direct involvement.* Should parents find themselves needing to offer a great deal of assistance, the school should be notified so that the situation may be discussed and remedied. In the same vein, parents should also notify the school if their child is spending what seems to be either an inadequate or excessive amount of time on homework.

## **Illness**

If a student is too ill to attend school on any given day, the school should be notified by his/her parent prior to 8:30 a.m. on the day involved. If such notification is not received by that time, the school will call a parent to find out the nature of the absence. Students are held responsible for completing work missed through illness.

Should a student become ill during the school day, he/she should report to the school office.

## **Inclement Weather**

Should bad weather cause a delay in the opening of school, or the cancellation of classes altogether, an announcement will be made on the websites for channels WGGB-TV (Ch. 40) [[www.wggb.com](http://www.wggb.com)], WWLP-TV (Ch. 22) [[www.wwlp.com](http://www.wwlp.com)], and WSHM-TV (Ch. 3) [[www.cbs3springfield.com](http://www.cbs3springfield.com)]. As a rule, any "snow day" designated by the Westfield Public Schools will be observed by White Oak School. School bus drivers working under contract with public school systems generally observe the snow day decisions in their own school system.

If White Oak is open on a day declared a snow day in a student's home district, that student's absence will not be counted against a student's allowed absences.

## **Driving and Cars**

A student who holds a valid driver's license and wishes to drive himself/herself to school may be given that privilege by the school's administration on a case-by-case and space-available basis. It should be remembered that holding a driver's license and operating a vehicle are both activities that carry with them the need to display a great deal of maturity and a good sense of responsibility. Students wishing to drive a car to school must seek permission to do so from the Headmaster.

Under no circumstance is a student allowed to be in another student's car, whether moving or stationary, without express written permission from the parents of both students involved. Students wishing to drive to school must sign White Oak's Driving Guidelines, which are available in the Dean's Office.

## **Prohibited Materials**

Tobacco: It is widely understood in today's society that the use of tobacco in any form (smoking, snuff, chewing tobacco) is unhealthy to both the user and others around him/her. Thus, it would be irresponsible of a school to condone such usage. Tobacco usage of any sort at White Oak School is not acceptable; infractions of this rule will be dealt with as a serious offense.

Drugs and Alcohol: The use or possession of illegal drugs or alcohol in any form by students at White Oak School is strictly forbidden. Infractions of this rule will result in the most serious disciplinary responses by the school. The abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs is also considered a violation of this rule and will be dealt with similarly.

## **Medications**

If a student is using medication prescribed by a doctor, his/her parents should notify the school to that effect and make arrangements with the school to have it administered during the school day as directed by the treating physician.

*Students should have no medicines, either prescription or non-prescription, in their possession at any time while under the school's jurisdiction. Unauthorized use, possession, or distribution of such medication by students may be cause for dismissal.*

## **Disciplinary Responses**

Discipline in a school begins with respect. For the school itself, that means respect for the students. Students, in turn, show their respect for the other students and ultimately for themselves.

Learning the meaning of this respect, and indeed, learning the boundaries of self-discipline, is a part of the work of any school. For students, most of this learning occurs through observation and through conversation with teachers and other students. In any good school, including White Oak, discipline is truly the result of networks of respect combined with reasonable discussion and explanation.

It is only when student behavior goes outside this boundary that the school will begin to enact overt "disciplinary" strategies. If a behavior is escalating and teacher-intervention has not been sufficient, or if a behavior warrants it, the student will meet with the Dean of Students. The Dean will listen to the student, review the facts of the matter with the

student, and take appropriate action. If two or more students are involved in a dispute, the Dean will attempt to guide the students to a resolution of any issues rather than simply moving toward a punitive response. Care is given to evaluate the extent to which the matter was based on confusion or misunderstanding by the student. Care is especially given to determine to what degree a behavior may be a manifestation of the student's underlying disability.

In many cases, the Dean will also confer with the Headmaster, the Academic Dean, and relevant teachers for additional information.

When called for, the school's disciplinary options include:

written or verbal apologies  
reprimands and warnings, by a teacher or school administrator  
behavior monitoring sheets, involving parental review  
in-school or after school detention  
meeting with a student's parents  
meeting with a student's LEA liaison  
suspension of 1 - 3 days  
termination or dismissal, pursuant to all Mass. DESE guidelines

White Oak will not tolerate verbally or physically abusive behavior by a student toward himself/herself or others. Other behaviors that will lead to immediate disciplinary action included but are not limited to:

1. Any use or possession of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and/or other prohibited substances or items. Any misuse of medication or other substances in a manner which could reasonably be seen as substance abuse.
2. Any involvement in sexual misconduct or sexual harassment.
3. Theft from other students, teachers, or the school, both on campus or during any school-sponsored activity.
4. Continued failure to observe the dress code.
5. Refusal to obey and follow instructions from teachers or administrators.
6. Withholding, upon application to the school, of information or records central to the student's or school's well-being.
7. Behavior or conduct that is deemed by the school to be detrimental to the school community, whether at school or elsewhere, while under the school's jurisdiction. This includes conduct deemed to be

dangerous, disruptive, harmful or threatening to oneself or to others.

State educational guidelines require all schools to describe their use of non-violent restraints with students. White Oak conforms to state guidelines on this issue, but feels strongly that physical restraint, regardless of how non-violent, is not an acceptable or necessary strategy. Instead, the School's efforts are put into de-escalating confrontations and interpersonal dispute. Given the nature of our population, this is a realistic goal and this policy has resulted in a "zero-restraint" history since the school's inception.

## **Cheating and Plagiarism**

In an academic community, cheating and plagiarism are considered to be serious affronts to the educational process. While there are a multitude of gray areas on this topic at different student grade levels, the school may respond to such cases with a variety of disciplinary measures, including a warning, a failing grade on the assignment, or academic probation. Repeated offenses may be considered cause for dismissal.

## **Academic Reports**

At White Oak School, academic reports chronicle the state of a student's abilities and his/her progress toward personal educational goals rather than focusing primarily on letter grades. Parents receive four reports each year reflecting the current status of the student in each class and giving an overview of the student's achievement.

High-school and junior high-school students will receive quarterly grades, in order to assist their transition to other high-schools, to college or to vocational programs. In this case, however, the narrative academic report will continue to be the most informative source for information on the student's capabilities.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

White Oak School hosts two parent-teacher evenings each school year; one in the Fall and one in the Spring. These afford parents the opportunity to gain familiarity with their child's progress within the academic program, and to learn more about the events and activities taking place at the school. The dates of these conferences will be sent out at the beginning of each school year.

## **Health and Immunizations**

Prior to enrolling in the school, students will be required to present evidence of compliance with all state immunization requirements. In addition, all health information and release forms must be signed and submitted to the school before enrollment can be completed.

Medical expenses occasioned by accidents at the school or on school-sponsored trips are the responsibility of the student's own medical insurer. Up-to-date medical insurance policy numbers must be provided for a student's records, in order to facilitate emergency medical treatment.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

The school offers students the opportunity to be involved in several different activities, including:

Cheerleading	Music
Community Service	School Newspaper
Drama	Student Council

Other activities may be added or deleted to reflect student interest.

## **Field Trip Permission**

The school issues two types of permission forms for field trips. The first, for in-state, short distance travel, is valid throughout the year. The second category of permission forms is for longer distance, out-of-state travel; such forms are issued separately for each trip.

## **Amendments to the Handbook**

This Handbook may be amended during the school year if additions or changes are deemed necessary. Any such change will be noted on the school's website.

## **Signature Page**

The signature page, which accompanies this document, must be signed by the student and his/her parent, and returned to the school at the time of the student's enrollment. This should be done each school year.

**White Oak School**  
**Student Handbook**

**Signature Page**

We have read the White Oak School Student Handbook and reviewed the guidelines and policies it presents. We understand the school's commitment to protect the integrity of its program, and support White Oak's commitment to its students and to their education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return this form to the school office with your other parent packet information.