

Amherst Elementary School

Parent/Student Handbook

2021 - 2022

Mrs. Jennifer Crews, Principal
156 Davis Street
Amherst, VA 24521

434.946.9704 (main office)
434.946.9706 (FAX)

“You will go F.A.R. when you are Focused, Accountable & Respectful”



Home of the Panthers

Welcome to Amherst Elementary School

Please take time to familiarize yourself with the policies and practices explained in this handbook. Working together, we can ensure that all of our students receive a quality education in an environment that is safe, appropriate, and respectful. Your support of our school and its employees is greatly appreciated!

We may be reached by voicemail or email.

For voicemail, dial 528.6499 and enter the extension listed in parenthesis when prompted.

Preschool Special Education

Kristin Cox (26806) kcox@amherst.k12va.us

Kindergarten

Nancy Naisawald (26822) nnaisawald@amherst.k12.va.us
Kellie Arrington (26103) karrington@amherst.k12.va.us
Melanie Lewis (26100) mlewis@amherst.k12.va.us

First Grade

Teresa Taylor (25807) ttaylor@amherst.k12.va.us
Julia Simon jsimon@amherst.k12.va.us

Second Grade

Becky Johnson (26814) bjohnson@amherst.k12.va.us
Cheryl Peters (26819) cpeters@amherst.k12.va.us
Emily Hackenbracht ehackenbracht@amherst.k12.va.us

Third Grade

Susan Bailey (21803) sbailey@amherst.k12.va.us
Amy Dawson (26831) mharvey@amherst.k12.va.us
Michele Harvey (26812) mharvey@amherst.k12.va.us

Fourth Grade

Misty Ferguson (26815) mferguson@amherst.k12.va.us
Beth Wood (25809) ewood@amherst.k12.va.us

Fifth Grade

Nichole Dowdy (26821) ndowdy@amherst.k12.va.us
Kandance Reid (26808) kreid@amherst.k12.va.us

Special Education

Jessica Putnam (*20152) jputnam@amherst.k12.va.us
Karen Wells (26832) kwells@amherst.k12.va.us
Cassandra Woods (24802) cwoods@amherst.k12.va.us

ESL

Deanna Day dday@amherst.k12.va.us

Reading Specialists (Title I)

Jennifer Johnson (26815) jjohnson@amherst.k12.va.us
Kim Stark i (26835) kstark@amherst.k12.va.us

Resource

Michelle Abbott (26816) mabbott@amherst.k12.va.us
Erin Calhoun (26803) ecalhoun@amherst.k12.va.us
Stephanie Eckenrode (*26137) seckenrode@amherst.k12.va.us
Sandy Jennings (*26141) sneblett@amherst.k12.va.us
Andrea Sisson (26820) asisson@amherst.k12.va.us
Melissa Norwood (26824) mnorwood@amherst.k12.va.us

Assistants

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Sabrina Markle smarkle@amherst.k12.va.us
Eliza Vest evest@amherst.k12.va.us
Debra Eby deby@amherst.k12.va.us
Adriane Chadwick achadwick@amherst.k12.va.us

Custodians

Geroge Thompson gthompson@amherst.k12.va.us
Karen McDaniel kmcdaniel@amherst.k12.va.us
George White gwhite@amherst.k12.va.us

Child Nutrition Staff

Leslie Tweedy (*26139) ltweedy@amherst.k12.va.us
Barbara Johnson bbjohnson@amherst.k12.va.us
Elizabeth Mays emays@amherst.k12.va.us

Office

Jennifer Crews (*26140) jhcrews@amherst.k12.va.us
Elizabeth Sale esale@amherst.k12.va.us
Health Assistant (*26134)

Virtual Lead Specialist

MISSION STATEMENT

The school and community will provide a safe, nurturing environment enabling each child to reach his or her full academic potential. We believe a solid educational foundation will empower students to become responsible, self-reliant citizens.

VISION STATEMENT

We will be recognized as a school of academic excellence. The collaborative efforts of the community and school will ensure that each child becomes a life-long learner.



MASCOT

Panther

SCHOOL COLORS

Blue and White

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Any student who lives in the Amherst Elementary School attendance zone and who has reached his/her fifth birthday on or before September 30th may be enrolled once proof of residency is provided.

Younger students may qualify for our preschool special education class. Contact the Office of Student Services 434.946.9341 for more information.

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ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION

Electronic registration is now available through Parent Portal for Amherst County Public Schools. Parent/Guardians can now update student information through a web portal that is accessed through the parent account and clicking on the eCollect forms icon on the left hand menu bar. In order to proceed with the electronic registration process, parent/guardians will need to have already set up an account on Parent Portal, or you can contact the school office to receive instructions on how to set up your account and associate your student with that account. You will still be required to provide proof of residency for any address changes.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY

Proof of residency is required for all students who are newly enrolling at any Amherst County Public School. Proof of residency will be required for students entering any transition year including Kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A parent or guardian who wishes to enroll a child in the Amherst County Schools for the first time, regardless of the grade, is required to present the child's birth certificate.

SECTION 22.1-3.2 CODE OF VIRGINIA

A parent or guardian who wishes to enroll a child in Amherst County Public Schools for the first time (with the exception of kindergarten students) must complete a form stating that the student has not been expelled from school attendance at any private or public school for an offense in violation of school board policies relating to weapons, alcohol, or drugs, or the willful infliction of injury to another person.

Amherst County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices, as required by Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, and Section 504. Mr.

James Gallagher, Chief Human Resources Officer, is designated as the Compliance Officer responsible for assurances of non-discrimination. He may be reached at the following address: P O Box 1257, Amherst, Virginia 24521, and telephone number (434) 946-9376. Dr. William Wells, Assistant Superintendent, is the Division

Discipline Supervisor and is responsible for the fair and equitable implementation of the Division's discipline policies. He can be reached at the following address: P O Box 1257, 153 Washington Street, Amherst, Virginia 24521, telephone number 434-946-9343, and email wwells@amherst.k12.va.us.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION / IMMUNIZATIONS

Within a year prior to entry for the first time to any public kindergarten or to any public elementary school, as deemed by the State Department of Health, a child must have a comprehensive physical examination by a qualified licensed physician. Admission of students without a physical examination is not allowed. In addition, students in grades 1-5 are required to provide a certificate of immunization upon entering any Amherst County Public Schools.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

If a student moves out of the school zone or out of the county, the parent is to notify the school immediately. Upon request from the receiving school, records will be forwarded. The parent or guardian must sign an authorization for the release of confidential information at the school in which their child is being enrolled.

OUT-OF-ZONE STUDENTS

Requests for out-of-zone students to attend Amherst Elementary School must be completed each year between May 1st and July 15th and are to be submitted to the Office of the Principal.

MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As directed by the General Assembly of Virginia, a Moment of Silence is part of our instructional day. Each day will include the Moment of Silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

SCHOOL HOURS -- 9:00 A.M. – 3:45 P.M. MONDAY through FRIDAY

Our building opens for students at 8:45 a.m. All students should arrive at school between 8:45 a.m. and 9:05 a.m. **Students MUST NOT be dropped off at school prior to 8:45 AM or picked up from school after 3:50 PM unless enrolled in the Y program.**

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

-Students arriving by bus or car will enter at the cafeteria entrance and are to remain in the classroom until dismissed.

-Students departing by bus or car will be supervised by staff until they are on the bus, until they are under parent/guardian supervision, or until 3:45 PM – the latest time any car rider may be picked up.

-Parents who transport their children to school should use the traffic circle for dropping off and picking up students. Unless there is a need to come into the building, parents should refrain from coming into the school to pick up or drop off their children during arrival and dismissal time. Vehicles must be parked in the parking lot near the gym at all times. Parking is not permitted in the traffic circle or past the signs that state, ACPS EMPLOYEE PARKING ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT.

YMCA PROGRAM

Students who arrive before 8:30 a.m. and depart after regular dismissal must be enrolled in the YMCA Program. The program runs Monday through Friday from 6:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:45-6:00 p.m. Rates are available by calling the YMCA. If your child is enrolled in both the Morning and After School Care Program, you are eligible for a discount. To register your child, please call the YMCA at 847-8750.

STUDENT RELEASE

Amherst Elementary students may not leave the school premises with anyone unless permission has been granted by the parent. Parents requesting relatives or friends to take their children out of school should submit written permission to the child's teacher and/or principal. In addition, for safety purposes, these relatives or friends picking up your children must provide **photo identification**. Regular car riders will not be called out of class early except in the case of an emergency.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARD

An emergency information card is kept in the office for each student. It contains the necessary information that will be used to contact you should your child become ill or be seriously injured at school. ***It is the parent's responsibility to provide complete information and to provide updated information to the school when it becomes available.***

When an illness or injury occurs at school, we make every attempt to immediately contact parents or, if needed, the emergency contacts listed. In the case of an extreme emergency, the child will be transported to the emergency room or family physician's office.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

Students are expected to care for textbooks, library books, and any equipment or materials at their disposal. If items entrusted to a student's care are lost or damaged, a fee may be charged.

INSURANCE

Student accident insurance may be purchased by the parent/guardian. Insurance information can be obtained in the school lobby. Enrollment is handled directly by the parent/guardian with the company.

TELEPHONE

Telephone service is provided for school business. Students will be granted use of the telephone for emergencies and must secure permission. Unless absolutely necessary, students will not be called from class to answer the phone or be given a message.

RETURNED CHECK SERVICE CHARGE

When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us to use information from the check to make a one-time electronic fund transfer from your account or to process the payment as a check transaction. You authorize us to collect a fee through electronic fund transfer from your account if your payment is returned unpaid.

MONEY BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

Students bringing money to school for lunch, field trips, fundraisers, and any other purposes should do so by securing it in a sealed envelope. The student's name, teacher's name, amount of money, and purpose for the money should be written on the envelope. Students should bring only the amount of money needed for that school day. Students should keep their money with them at all times and not announce to other students on the bus or at school that they are carrying money. Money should not be left in unattended desks, coats, or lunch boxes. Students should not give money to their peers.

SCHOOL CONCERNS

Parents should direct concerns about their children to the specific teachers involved. Please call in advance or send a note with your child for an appointment. **Teachers cannot conduct parent conferences during instructional times.** Teachers will not discuss other students due to confidentiality. The principal is available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. Conferences may be held as necessary. Parents are welcome and encouraged to bring concerns, ideas, and suggestions.

FRIDAY FOLDERS

Student folders are sent home each Friday. All notices, communications, and weekly reports are included in this folder. Remember to ask your child for his/her folder each Friday!

CALENDAR/NEWSLETTER

A school calendar will be sent home at the beginning of the year. This calendar will be updated throughout the year and can be accessed on the Amherst Elementary website. A school newsletter will be sent home in students' Friday folders weekly.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Students should take all possessions and assignments home with them on a daily basis. Once students have left the building by bus or car, they will not be able to return to school to retrieve their assignments or possessions.

INVITATIONS/GIFTS

Parents should not send invitations to parties to be distributed at school, unless every student in the classroom is given one. Invitations will not be distributed to select few students as this causes hurt feelings amongst students.

Non-instructional items such as, but not limited to, flowers and gifts, should not be sent/brought to school to be delivered to students.

REPORT CARDS & INTERIMS

Report cards are sent home at the end of each nine weeks. Interim reports will be sent home midway through each nine weeks. We hope our students will work hard because they value learning.

For Dates please review the supplied school calendar.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

We hope a team approach to communication will begin at registration day and continue throughout the year. Student learning is enhanced when parents and teachers partner and work together to promote learning.

Conferences may be scheduled any time throughout the year. Please contact teachers or the principal to schedule conferences as needed.

MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT RECORDS

Amherst Elementary School maintains a cumulative record on each of its students in grades K-5. This record contains scholastic and attendance information and may contain special education and Title I Reading information. All parents have the right to review their child's scholastic records.

In addition to the rights to inspect and review a student's education record, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires the following:

1. The parent may request the amendment of the student's education record to ensure that it is not misleading, inaccurate, or in violation of the student's privacy or other rights.
2. The parent must consent before disclosures or personally identifiable information is released to other parties except to the extent FERPA permits disclosure without consent.
3. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, all parents, even those not having custody of their children, have the right to see their child's educational record.

To request information concerning your child's scholastic record, contact Mrs. Jennifer Crews, Principal.

FOOD SERVICES – CAFETERIA

Breakfasts and lunches are provided in the school cafeteria for those who are in need of meals. All students will be provided meals daily, if needed, at no cost.

FEDERAL MEALS PROGRAM

Amherst Elementary School participates in the Federal Meals Program. In order for a child to receive free or reduced-price meals, the parent/guardian must submit an application to determine if they qualify. Applications are available in the cafeteria.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

FULL DAY CLOSING: In the event that schools are closed for the full day(s), local news media will disperse information prior.

EARLY DISMISSAL: In the event that it becomes necessary to close school after the day has begun, bus drivers and parents/guardians will be notified of the closing by the local news media as early as possible. Working parents/guardians should make arrangements for their child's early school dismissal.

DELAYED OPENING: Local news media disperse information stating that the school opening is delayed. This information should serve as an alert to all to keep

listening. Sometimes a two-hour delay can be changed to a closed day, depending on the weather conditions. **Breakfast is NOT served at school on days that are TWO-HOUR delayed. Parents should NOT call the school to receive information on school closings; rather, dial 434.946.9386 and press option 7 for the latest inclement weather schedule.**

STUDENT DRESS CODE

School is an institution for learning. What students wear can sometimes be distracting and, in some cases, may create unsafe situations. School Board Policy JFCAA states:

Attire must be suitable for school. Clothing that may be offensive to some or otherwise disruptive to the educational environment is not permitted. Examples of such clothing can include, but are not limited to:

1. halter tops
2. tank tops
3. cut-off shirts
4. see-through shirts
5. excessively torn jeans
6. clothing which advertises tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances
7. clothing with language, symbols, or pictures that is offensive or inappropriate for the school setting
8. excessively tight or short skirts or dresses
9. extremely tight shorts
10. apparel that can imply gang membership

PARENT AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Our teaching staff is dedicated and committed to delivering a high quality education. Given the current Covid Pandemic and trying to limit exposure to students and staff, Amherst Elementary will not be utilizing volunteers until further notice. We appreciate all of our families' willingness to help and support our teachers and staff throughout the past years.

ACPS Guidelines for Visitors During COVID-19 restrictions

For the safety of students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, ACPS has put in place the following guidelines for visitors to ACPS facilities:

- Visitors should make appointments prior to visiting the school whenever possible.

- Visitors who come to the school without an appointment will not be allowed past the office without permission from an administrator.
- All visitors must wear a mask and practice social distancing.
- All visitors must complete a health screening, to include temperature check, prior to meeting with any staff members or being allowed past the office for any reason.
- Parents/guardians seeking conferences with teachers and administrators should do so over phone or via a virtual platform (ie Google Meet) whenever possible.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

Amherst Elementary Parent Teacher Organization needs the support and participation of every parent and teacher. Meetings will be held throughout the year. Please plan to join us for these very important meetings – we need your involvement.

SCHOOL PICTURES

As a service to parents and students, school pictures are taken twice a year at school. Purchases are not required. **Please notify the school in writing if you do not wish for your child to be photographed.**

STUDENT HEALTH

Amherst Elementary School will follow all health and safety practices, guidelines and regulations defined by Amherst County Public Schools.

MEDICATIONS

PRESCRIPTIONS:

Amherst County Public School personnel may give prescription medication to students only with a licensed prescriber's written order or current prescription and signed request from parent/guardian. Such medication must be in the original container. The label on the box/bottle must include:

Child's name	Doctor's name
Time to be given	Dosage amount
Name of medication	Reason for taking

NON-PRESCRIPTIONS:

Amherst County Public School personnel may give nonprescription medication to students only with written permission from the parent/guardian. Such permission shall include the name of the medication, the required

dosage, and the time the medication is to be given. Such medication must be in the original container. In order for non-prescription medication to be given to a student beyond five consecutive days, written permission from the child's physician shall be required. Dosages may not exceed that recommended by the manufacturer unless accompanied by a licensed treating physician's order specifying that the recommended dosage of the manufacturer is to be exceeded on the physician's instructions.

Except in rare instances and under a written order from a physician, a student may not administer drugs or medications to himself/herself.

Medication to be used at school must be delivered to (and picked up from) the school by the parent and not transported with students on the bus.

SCHOOL SAFETY

The issue of school safety is a shared concern. It is essential that communities, parents, educators, and students work together to develop a disciplined environment where learning can take place. We are committed to keeping school safety a primary focus. We believe students must feel secure and reside in a safe environment. We welcome all concerns regarding the following procedures.

Our Campus

- All parents, volunteers, and visitors are required to sign in whenever students are present and must wear a visitor's identification badge and wear a mask. We ask that you call ahead and schedule an appointment with our office.
- All entrance doors are locked to prevent unauthorized entry. Guests must request entry using the intercom located outside the main entrance.
- No one other than a legal guardian or authorized person may pick up a student unless a written note, signed by the legal guardian, is furnished and the authorized person provides photo identification. If a child wishes to go home with another child, parents of the child must send a permission note to school.
- If you find it necessary to make afternoon transportation changes, please contact us via phone immediately due to our reduced capacity on buses this school year.
- We cannot guarantee transportation changes, but will do our best to assist in case of emergency.
- The building is equipped with a security system.
- Several telephone lines serve the school and each classroom has a telephone.
- Safety audits are conducted annually.
- The building is open to the public Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. At least one

custodian is on duty during this time. Friday hours vary.

- The Amherst County Police Department routinely canvases the campus.

Our Students

- Students are expected to practice good citizenship and treat peers and adults with respect.
- Positive discipline plans are established within each classroom.
- Group guidance and individual counseling on topics of anger management, conflict resolution, and social skills are available to students.
- All students, even with social distancing measures in place, must wear a mask unless they are eating food or drinking.
- All students must maintain a 6 ft social distance at all times, recess will still be participated in but no playground equipment will be used
- handwashing and hygiene will be reminded of frequently throughout the day

Our Faculty and Staff

- School personnel wear identification badges, face masks and socially distance at all times.
- Designated first responders have been trained for medical emergency assistance.
- A Crisis Intervention Plan has been developed; a Crisis Team is a component of this plan.
- OSHA Safety Training is provided annually.
- A school health assistant is provided on-site.
- Staff supervises students at all times during the school day.

DISCIPLINE

Educational research suggests that the most important contributor to student achievement is a focused academic environment that is free from disruptions. The faculty and staff of Amherst Elementary set high expectations for student behavior. Our school rules/expectations are:

1. **Be safe.**
2. **Be respectful.**
3. **Make good choices.**

Additionally, each classroom teacher may have an individual classroom discipline plan which includes general rules and is specific to the needs of the individual classroom. Classroom discipline plans should also incorporate rewards for appropriate behavior and consequences for infractions. Some infractions are extremely severe in nature and warrant immediate intervention from the office. These infractions include, but are not limited to:

1. Fighting
2. Possession of weapons/facsimiles

3. Possession of tobacco/alcohol
4. Destruction of school property
5. Threats

CLASSROOM TEACHER DISCIPLINE RESPONSIBILITIES

Each teacher at Amherst Elementary School has the following responsibilities with respect to discipline:

1. To provide every student with the right to obtain an education in an orderly classroom.
2. To make students aware of rules and regulations and why such rules and regulations are necessary.
3. To maintain a high degree of fairness and consistency in carrying out disciplinary procedures.
4. To have a positive approach in all disciplinary actions.
5. To explain to students who violate rules why their behavior is unacceptable.
6. To inform parents of serious discipline problems or repeated violations of rules.
7. To develop with parents an understanding that good discipline habits must be taught and reinforced in the home.

Each classroom teacher is expected to handle his/her own discipline problems. If a student reaches the final consequence or commits a serious offense, the child will be referred to the principal.

When a child is referred to the principal, the following discipline procedures will be followed:

1. The parent will be notified in writing or by phone.
2. The principal will conference with the child and give him/her a chance to tell his/her version of the incident.
3. If the child has repeatedly violated rules, injured another child, or committed a serious infraction of the rules, one or more of the following may occur:
 - a. The parent will be required to pick the child up at school.
 - b. The child will be separated from other children for the remainder of the day.
 - c. The child may not return to school until the parent meets with the teacher and the principal. During the conference, a plan of improvement will be developed.
 - d. The child will be suspended from school.

TECHNOLOGY DEVICES

Students may not use or have cell phones, iPods, iPads, or any other electronic device during school due to the interruption they cause to the learning environment. Having out or using these devices may result in disciplinary consequences. The school will not be responsible for these devices if they are lost or stolen.

USE OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND/OR VAPE PRODUCTS

Amherst Elementary is a safe place for children and for the community.

- _____ Police and/or juvenile authorities shall be contacted when illegal drugs are discovered on school grounds.
- Any student who is found guilty of distributing illegal drugs while under the jurisdiction of the Board or on school property shall be immediately suspended for ten days with a recommendation being made to the Superintendent of Schools for his/her suspension from school.
- Any student enrolled in public schools who is found carrying, consuming, and/or selling any drugs, alcohol, unknown substance, or other mind-altering substance on school property at any time when school is in session or at any school activity or on any teacher-chaperoned student trip will be subject to immediate expulsion. This also pertains to any student who attends any school-sponsored activity after consuming any alcoholic beverage or drug or other mind-altering substance. The loss of participation in all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year will accompany the above penalty.
- Tobacco and/or vape products are not allowed on school property.

WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

Students are not permitted to bring to school weapons or objects/toys that resemble weapons. This includes water guns, all knives, and nail clippers. State laws set forth strict guidelines regarding weapons on school property (State Statue 18.2-308.1). If a student violates this code, the incident will be referred to law enforcement to determine possible criminal charges.

STUDENT SEARCHES

Under School Board regulations, desks and/or backpacks may be inspected if the administration has reason to suspect the presence of articles or materials injurious to the best interest of the school or suspects the presence of other harmful substances which are likely to pose a threat to the maintenance of discipline and order in the school.

BULLYING

Bullying is repeatedly making fun of, embarrassing, or scaring another person. A student, either individually or as a part of a group, shall not harass or bully others. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, ongoing physical intimidation, taunting, name-calling, insults, and any combination of prohibited activities. Prohibited conduct includes ongoing verbal conduct consisting of comments regarding the race, gender, religion, physical

abilities or characteristics, or associates of the targeted person.

If a bullying situation is identified, parents of the bully and victim will be notified of the ongoing issue by teacher, school counselor, or principal.

We believe several points are important as we address bullying at Amherst Elementary. First, to educate all staff members on recognizing and addressing bullying to ensure the behavior stops. Second, to explicitly teach students what bullying is and ways to respond if they are bullied. Third, to address any bullying issues that arise with individual students and their parents when needed. Fourth, we encourage students to communicate with school personnel immediately when a bullying situation occurs so that it can be addressed in a timely manner. Finally, to empower all students to stand up and address students that are bullying even if they are not the ones being bullied.

TORNADO, FIRE, AND LOCKDOWN DRILLS

To be prepared for a real crisis, we practice procedures for such disasters as tornado, fire, and unwarranted intrusions into the building (lockdown). Fire drills are held once a week during the first two weeks of school and once a semester thereafter. We require students to walk quietly and quickly with their teachers to their designated areas outside the building. Once each child is accounted for and the situation has been assessed, the students return with their teachers in the same quiet manner to resume instruction. Safety and security for each student will be the primary focus during these practice drills.

A tornado drill occurs in the spring when tornado season is most prevalent. Two lockdown drills are held during the first 20 days of school and one each semester thereafter.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Most of our school buses transport sixty or more students to and from school. The bus driver is required to direct all his/her attention to driving the bus and ensuring each child arrives at his/her intended destination safely. Distraction caused by student misbehavior endangers the lives of all those riding on the bus. Bus discipline is a matter of prime concern for us because of the potential harm that may result to students.

Students are transported daily at public expense. The bus driver is in full charge of the bus and the students riding the bus.

Each student rides a bus to which he/she is regularly assigned. Permission slips written by the parent or guardian and signed by the principal or designee are

required before a student is allowed to ride an alternate bus.

To ensure the safety of all students, it is School Board policy that all elementary students must be met by someone of middle school age or older at the bus stop. Students will be returned to school and parents will be required to come pick up their children if there is no one present to meet the bus.

BUS RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Students shall remain seated.
2. Students will not fight or use obscene language.
3. Students will keep heads, hands, arms, etc. and belongings inside the bus.
4. Students will not eat or drink on the bus.
5. Students will not litter.
6. Vandals will pay for bus damage.
7. Students will be at loading and unloading places on time.
8. Students must use the same loading and unloading place unless they have a note from their parents, cosigned by their principal or designee.
9. Students must cross the street 10 to 15 feet in front of the school bus.
10. Students may only ride on the bus that they are assigned by the Division Superintendent or his duly authorized agent.
11. Students are not permitted to cross a dual highway when loading or unloading from a school bus.
12. Students will not obstruct the aisle or exits with any objects.
13. Students riding buses must wear face masks during the duration of their ride. One student per seat unless seated with a sibling from their household
14. Cellular phones may be used by students being transported on ACPS buses and vans. Students may use their phones to send text messages, access social media, access the internet, listen to music, or watch videos. Students are required to utilize earbuds or headphones when viewing videos or listening to music. Students are not allowed to make phone calls, record images or sound, or take pictures. All content being accessed must be within the guidelines of the ACPS acceptable use policy. Students must not wear earbuds or headphones while boarding or disembarking the school bus or while crossing the road in front of the school bus.

INSTRUCTION

Amherst County Public Schools use the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) to guide and improve academic

achievement for all of our students. Students take SOL tests in the core areas in third, fourth, and fifth grades.

To prepare students, the school division has aligned the curriculum and designed pacing guides to ensure that all SOL objectives are taught before testing. Classroom instruction, homework, and assessments reflect the knowledge students are expected to know to perform well on the SOL tests.

***Students and/or their parents may request for the reconsideration of any learning resource utilized with the curriculum. Policy KLB and KLB-E should be used when providing this request to the school principal.**

CURRICULUM GUIDES & NINE WEEKS TESTING

Amherst County has created and implemented the use of curriculum guides for math, English, science, and social studies. These curriculum guides have been developed, at the division level, to guide our teachers in teaching the SOL objectives. In order for us to document students' progress and provide remediation and intervention to those students in need, students will be given nine week benchmark tests assessing the standards covered during that grading period. Students will not be given grades on these tests. Results will be used to improve instruction and determine which students need remediation.

STATE TESTING PROCEDURES

Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will take SOL tests to determine their levels of proficiency in English, math, science and/or social studies. These tests will take place in May.

You may help your child prepare for these tests by:

- *Encouraging him/her to take school work seriously each day by being good listeners and asking questions.
- *Insisting that he/she reads daily at home.
- *Helping him/her memorize basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. These facts are the cornerstones of more sophisticated math skills/concepts.
- *Insisting he/she complete homework assignments.
- *Maintaining regular contact with teachers.

PALS ASSESSMENT

All students participate in the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS). PALS testing is administered to all students in grades K-5 in the fall as a benchmark. PALS teachers work with classroom teachers to provide additional assistance for students who do not perform up to the benchmark standards in grades K-3. Students in grades K-5 are reassessed mid-year, as needed, and in the spring.

Second grade students participate in additional formal assessments each year to determine whether they are performing up to their individual abilities and if screening for the Talented and Gifted Program may be necessary.

RETENTION

The decision to retain a child in a grade should be mutually agreed upon by the parents, teacher, and principal. We use multiple criteria while taking into consideration the following factors: the student's academic progress; maturity; attendance; age; prior retention; learning issues; results from the Virginia Standards of Learning tests; and other factors specific to the student. Final decision for retention rests with the principal.

Parents will be notified in writing at the beginning of the third nine weeks if their child is being considered for retention due to the lack of mastering the required skills to be promoted at the end of that school year.

INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT TEAM (IST)

An IST Committee is comprised of staff from Amherst Elementary to assist teachers with students having difficulty in the classroom. These difficulties may stem from academic, emotional, behavioral, or physical concerns. Students are referred to the committee by a teacher, other faculty member, or parent. Teachers and parents are given strategies to accommodate the child. If the child continues to demonstrate a lack of progress in any of the areas mentioned above, a recommendation will be made by the committee for further investigation to determine solutions and resources for student success.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Students who are referred to IST may qualify for special education services through an eligibility hearing. This is conducted by Central Office personnel with principal, teacher, and parental involvement throughout the process. Students who qualify will be enrolled in a special education class and receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Personnel for Amherst County Public Schools also visit Amherst Elementary to provide services for students needing interventions in vision, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Amherst Elementary School is committed to encouraging parental involvement in the Title I Program. The following activities are provided for parental involvement in the Title I Program:

- Amherst Elementary Parent Advisory committee meets 2-3 times a year. The committee is composed of parents, reading specialist, principal, and teacher.
- Parents of each student selected to participate in the Title I Program are notified and an explanation of services through the program is provided.
- An open house and/or workshops are provided annually to assist parents in promoting the education of their children at home.
- A parent center is set-up in each school for parents and students. Parents are invited to check out materials to use with their children at home.
- Title I parents are given the opportunity to evaluate the Title I program yearly and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Newsletters containing program information and suggestions for parents are sent home 4 times during the year. Information for the newsletter comes from the schools and Parent Advisory Committee members.
- Title I students receive Progress Reports each nine weeks. Parents are asked to sign the reports and return them to school.

RESOURCE INSTRUCTION

In addition to the regular education and special education programs, students participate in the following resource classes:

PHYSICAL EDUCATION – Physical education instruction integrates Health and Physical Education SOL into the program. Students explore archery, basketball, rhythmic movements, soccer, physical fitness, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, games, movement education, manipulative activities, and good sportsmanship. To ensure safety, students should wear tennis shoes on days when they have PE.

MUSIC – Students PreK through fifth grade are provided with general music instruction which integrates elementary music SOL and some core SOL into the music curriculum. Students learn basic music skills and theories through movement, songs, listening activities, instruments, and other hands-on activities. Students also develop an interest in music and the ability to express themselves musically.

ART - At AES, we are following the art methodology of T.A.B. which means Teaching for Artistic Behavior. The art teacher serves as a facilitator or coach to students by presenting big ideas or specific skills. Students have the choice of what skills or themes they want to use in their art. The following are studio types of behaviors that an artist exhibits that the art teacher will teach your child. Develop Craft: Technique and Studio Practice; Engage and Persist: Committing and Following Through; Envision: Thinking of the next steps to finish an artwork; Express: Finding

Meaning by expressing feelings or ideas in a work of art; Observe: Really seeing all of the details; Reflect: Explain and evaluate my art making process; Stretch and Explore: Explore new techniques and new medias; and Understand the Art World: Communities, world cultures, art specific movements. These behaviors encourage authentic art making! Our children will be learning how to plan an idea in advance; select the appropriate or desired media; work through mistakes and challenges; and reflect on the success of their artwork. This methodology focuses on the process of art making and is choice-based. Students will be exposed to a variety of artmaking tools through different centers set up in the room such as drawing, collage, sculpture, printmaking, fiber arts, clay, and painting. Four to five centers will be open at a time for student use.

ENRICHMENT – The enrichment specialist works with students in the TAG (Talented and Gifted) program, as well as co-teaches enrichment lessons in classrooms when possible.

SCHOOL COUNSELING

Our school counselor is readily available to assist students, parents, and staff by:

- teaching weekly guidance lessons to all grade levels on important topics such as social skills, good character traits, bullying prevention, etc.
- conducting small group and individual sessions with students geared toward their specific needs
- communicating with families in an effort to help meet student needs by providing in-school support and outside resources when necessary
- working hand-in-hand with parents to understand attendance policies and help create a plan to improve attendance when needed
- preparing 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students and their families for SOL testing
- helping 5th grade students prepare for the middle school transition
- teaming up with staff to problem solve and create a safe and successful learning environment for all students

LIBRARY – A full-time library/media specialist provides instruction in library skills and literature appreciation while integrating core SOL into the library curriculum. Classes visit the library/media center at least once each week for instruction, as well as an opportunity to check out materials. A Covid plan has been put in to place to allow students to check out and return books safely. Books will be wiped/sanitized according to regulations. Students are also invited to visit the library to return library books and select additional books to checkout during morning dismissal time. Books are normally checked out for one week and are due the next week at the student's regularly scheduled library period. Books may be renewed. If a book is more than two weeks overdue, a note will be sent

home with the student's interim report and/or report card. This notice is just a reminder to the student and parent to keep looking for the library book. If after several months the book is still missing, a replacement fee will be required. If the book is later found within the same school year, your money will be refunded. Books that are returned that can no longer be circulated due to damage will also require a replacement fee. Damage is most often created by pets or food/beverage accidents. This fee is based on the replacement cost of the book.

GIFTED EDUCATION

Amherst County Public Schools offers a Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program that recognizes the special academic needs of high achieving and talented students. Students may be referred to the TAG Program by a teacher, parent, peer, or self-referral. Several different criteria are used for eligibility into the TAG Program. Each school has an eligibility committee that evaluates the criteria. Areas of identification are: General Intellectual Aptitude K-12, Specific Aptitude K-12, and Visual or Performing Arts 9-12.

DARE INSTRUCTION

A specially trained uniformed officer from the Amherst County Sheriff's Department provides instruction in Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). The DARE curriculum will be taught in fourth grade. These lessons require up to an hour of interactive instruction once a week for 10 weeks.

FAMILY LIFE

Amherst County Public Schools has a Family Life curriculum based on state guidelines. Parents are invited to preview and discuss the specific grade level objectives with the teacher. Parents who wish for their child to opt out of the program must specify this desire in writing to the classroom teacher.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Amherst County Public Schools has adopted the Character Counts program. Students will be taught the six pillars (responsibility, trustworthiness, respect, caring, fairness, and citizenship) of Character Counts.

FIELD TRIPS

The teacher, with the approval of the principal, schedules field trips after their educational values have been established. Parents must sign a permission form and a medical release form before a student takes a field trip. Students whose behavior at school is inappropriate may not be permitted to participate in field trips.

Chaperones for field trips must accompany the students on any chartered bus trips. Chaperones will be responsible for students assigned to them and, therefore, should not bring any children other than those officially participating in the trip.

At times, charges may be made for field trips or specific programs. Provisions are made for students with special financial needs. Please contact the principal if provisions are needed.

School board practice requires that chaperones be fingerprinted prior to working with or supervising children. Please contact the Office of Human Resources at 434.946.9376 for further details.

HOMEWORK POLICY

The following policy was adopted by the Amherst County School Board and is in effect for all the county schools. A major goal of the instructional program is to assist students in becoming committed to the process of learning. Learning is not restricted to the classroom, but is a continuous process. The individual school can only teach a small portion of that which is valuable and available to be learned. More importantly, the school may stimulate, with the student, the thirst for knowledge and the desire to pursue solutions to problems. The home is a vital partner in this process and a systematic approach to homework can assist the teacher, parent, and student in achieving common learning goals.

The basic objective for any homework assignment is the reinforcement and application of previously learned concepts and skills. Homework assignments should be structured to reinforce and apply that which has been introduced and explained in the classroom.

Homework can provide an essential link between school and home. One measure of a program is the quality of the work done at home by the student. A strong home-school partnership can be greatly enhanced by an established homework program. Homework should be an important tool in developing independent thought, self-direction, and self-discipline. It can assist the student in developing good work habits and time management.

Guidelines for homework include:

- Homework should only be prescribed after the introduction and thorough explanation of the skills necessary to successfully complete the assignment.
- Homework should be assigned in such a manner that it will be clearly understood by all students.
- Homework should serve a valid purpose and be closely related to current classroom activities.
- A student's access to resource materials should be considered when making assignments.
- Homework should be evaluated promptly and returned to the student. Appropriate rewards should be given to those students who successfully complete assigned work. Effort should be recognized as well as competency.
- Teachers should seek to determine the cause if a student regularly fails to do assigned work. Teachers should not avoid giving homework because they believe students will not do the work.
- Excessive homework should be avoided.
- Homework should never be used for disciplinary purposes.
- Teachers and administrators should take appropriate steps to communicate the school division's policy with parents and solicit their support.

Kindergarten: 15 minutes Grades 1 & 2: 30 minutes
 Grades 3 & 4: 45 minutes Grade 5: 60 minutes

GRADING SCALE

Our teachers will be using 10-point grading scale when grading students' work in grades 2-12. Another change includes students earning a minimum of two grades per week, per content area.

Scale	Symbol
98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE

It is the responsibility of the student to see the teacher on the day he or she returns to school to receive assignments and schedule make-up work. All work must be completed within five school days from the return to school. When a student is absent, if a parent requests, assignments are to be available at the school by the end of the next school day.

Students are required to complete make-up work regardless of the reason for an absence.

Students will be graded in two grading categories this school year as follows:

- **Mastery of Content (60%)**
- **Measure of Progress (40%)**

ZEROES

If a student willfully refuses to complete and turn in assigned work within a reasonable timeframe, a grade of zero may be given. Parents will be notified when work completion becomes a problem. The teacher will seek to determine the cause of the student's failure to complete assigned work and will make multiple attempts to have the student complete the work. If a student's failure to turn in work is justified, it may be turned in late with an appropriate grade assigned.

RECESS

Every student will have recess as part of the instructional day. At times, part of recess may be used for other purposes such as completion of work or consequences related to misbehavior.

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION & AES AWARDS

Awards Assemblies will be presented twice a year at the end of each semester. They will be held in the gym and parents will be invited. There will be separate assemblies for grades K-2 and 3-5.

Awards will be given for attendance and academics. Academic awards include consistent effort and outstanding academics. Additional awards may be presented for Science Fair, Art, PE, etc. as appropriate.

PARENT TIPS

READ to your child. Every time you read to your child, you are building his/her appreciation of books and reading. A child who has been read to is usually more willing to read to himself.

1. **HELP** your child with his/her reading. Tell him/her words if he/she is in the beginning stages of reading. Help your child to work out the word if he/she is in a later stage by:
 - a. Looking at the picture
 - b. Skipping over the unknown word and reading the rest of the sentence to see if context helps with word identification.
 - c. Checking to see whether the word makes sense in the sentence.

2. BUILD a reading atmosphere at home. Have books, magazines, and newspapers around the house and let your child see you reading frequently. Tune into worthwhile programs on TV. Your child tends to imitate your behaviors/habits.
3. BUY books and children's magazines for your child on birthdays and holidays. Try to get books on his/her reading level so he/she can read these books for fun and pleasure.
4. SEE that your child has good attendance habits. When your child is absent from school, he/she misses work and may not be able to keep up with the class.
5. CHECK your child's report card. If your child is having trouble with any subject, consult his/her teacher to find out why and how you can help.
6. SET aside a regular time for homework. Help your child develop homework routines.
7. MAKE games. Play games with math flash cards or with word cards containing troublesome words.

When a game is made out of drill, children respond positively.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Every parent/guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child within the compulsory attendance age shall be responsible for such child's regular and punctual attendance at school as described in § 22.1-254.1 of the Code of Virginia.

Amherst County Public Schools believe that school attendance is directly related to academic achievement. Optimum student attendance is a cooperative effort. The Amherst County School Board and Amherst County Public Schools expect parents and students to take active roles in accepting that responsibility.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

I. Excused absences: Students who are absent MUST provide a written note from their parent/guardian within three days of returning to school stating the reason for the absence. Notes submitted after three days will only be excused by the Principal or his designee. When students have turned in notes from home for 10 days of absences, no additional days after that should be excused with a note from the parent. The only exception to that is students that have an up-to-date letter on file from a doctor stating that they have a chronic medical condition that may cause them to miss school or they have extenuating circumstances that have been approved by the principal. You guys have a letter that you should be sending home to parents to let them know they have reached their 10 parent notes, and no additional notes will be accepted unless it is from a doctor. We can not hold students/parents accountable for absences if they are being excused by the school, and just a reminder, those days are counting against your accreditation.

Excused absences will only be granted for the following reasons:

- a. Medical Condition or appointment verified by a doctor's note.
 1. **Please notify the school if upon the daily health screening your student is experiencing any of the identified Covid-19 symptoms. Please do not send your student to school if they are experiencing symptoms.**
- b. An approved school-sponsored event.
- c. Death or serious illness in immediate family. The Principal or designee will also consider each individual case and any extenuating circumstances.
- d. Personal required court appearances with documentation from the Court.
- e. Approved pre-planned absences.
- f. Extenuating circumstances which are determined by the principal or designee.
- g. Personal illness verified by written notice from a parent/guardian.

**** After written notes are submitted by a parent/ guardian for 10 days of personal illness of a student, a doctor's note or other documentation will be required to excuse any future absences.**

All other absences not included in the list above will be unexcused absences.

****2 or more consecutive absences will result in a phone call from AES***

II. Attendance Reporting and Action

a. For each day the student is absent, a phone call, text, and/or email will be sent to the parent/guardian to advise them that the student is absent.

b. On the fifth unexcused absence, the principal or his/her designee shall ensure that direct contact is made with the parent, either in person or by phone, to obtain an explanation for the student's absences and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. An attendance plan is discussed and developed with the parent.

c. On the sixth unexcused absence, the school will notify the parent/guardian and the student that they need to attend a truancy review conference. At his conference, a plan shall be developed to resolve the student's nonattendance.

d. On the 10th unexcused absence, the Student Accountability Coordinator shall file a truancy petition with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. This proceeding may be against both the parent/guardian and the student.

Covid-19 Appendix Section:

- Students, as well as, staff will have their temperatures taken and complete a health screening daily prior to entering the building.
- A daily health screening must be completed daily by students and staff to ensure the safety of our building.
- Students who have a yes to the posted health screening may not enter the building and the office must be notified.
- Students and staff will wear a face mask at all times, unless eating or drinking, even if social distancing precautions are used.
- Parents must schedule an appointment to be allowed inside the building for any other purpose than picking up their child or medical related reasons.
- Hygiene procedures and protocols will be taught and frequently used by both students and staff daily.
- Students will use social distancing at all times, no exceptions.
- Recess will be outdoors, weather permitting, but students will not be allowed to use playground equipment or share toys, etc. AES will be providing each student with a "playground pack" that will be for their personal use only.
- Students will be provided with a mask from ACPS but can wear their own. If your student forgets his/her mask AES will provide your student with a disposable mask for the day.
- Until further notice, parents will not be allowed to participate in lunch/class activities, etc..
- Parents/guardians will not be allowed to walk students to class upon drop off nor walk up to get their student. All car riders will need to remain in the line until your student is called for. Once

your student arrives if he/she needs assistance with buckling, we ask you to pull forward, park and assist your student.

- Your student will be sent home with his/her chromebook and are expected to return it back to school fully charged and ready to use.

As we get new updates regarding any new protocols, practices or procedures, we will alert all of our parents/guardians on a regular basis.

If interested in email updates and newsletters, please email Mrs.Sale at esale@amherst.k12.va.us or visit our social media, Facebook page.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please contact our school office 434-946-9704.

CODE OF CONDUCT INFORMATION

The entire student Code of Conduct can be found on the Amherst County Public Schools; website at www.amherst.k12.va.us under the parents/students tab. You can request a paper copy of the manual from your child's school.

FERPA INFORMATION

The entire FERPA Information can be found on the Amherst County Public Schools; website at www.amherst.k12.va.us under the parents/students tab. You can request a paper copy of the manual from your child's school.

UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

Students who do not have money on account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service may be

permitted to charge the meal. The Amherst County Public Schools does not have a charge limit.

A student carrying a negative balance is only permitted to charge a meal, not ala carte items. Reasonable efforts are used to avoid calling attention to a student's inability to pay.

In compliance with the Code of Virginia §22.1-79.7 Notice of low or negative balances in a students meal account

are sent to parents and the school principal. Communication may be by a letter addressed to the parent to be sent home with the student.

Parents are expected to pay all meal charges in full by the last day of the school year.

If a parent regularly fails to provide meal money or send food to school with the student and the student does not qualify for free or reduced benefits, the child nutrition director will inform the principal, who will determine the next course of action, which may include notifying the department of social services of suspected child neglect and/or taking legal steps to recover the unpaid meal charges.

The superintendent or superintendent's designee ensures that federal child nutrition funds are not used to offset the cost of unpaid meals and that the child nutrition program is reimbursed for bad debt. In order to accomplish those goals, the following procedures are followed:

- At least one written notice is provided to a student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the student being denied reimbursable meals for exceeding the division's charge limit.
- If payment of the negative balance is not received within 4 months, the debt will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. If the debt is not paid within 30 days of notice being given, it is considered bad debt for the purposes of federal law concerning unpaid meal charges.

NOTICE TO STUDENTS, PARENTS AND STAFF REGARDING THE USE OF CAMERA SURVEILLANCE ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

For the safety of our students, staff and visitors, the School District employs camera surveillance equipment for security purposes. This equipment may or may not be monitored at any time. Surveillance cameras will generally be utilized only in public areas where there is no "reasonable expectation of privacy." Public areas may include school buses; building entrances; hallways; parking lots; front offices where students, employees, and parents come and go; gymnasiums during public activities; cafeterias; and supply rooms. However, it is not possible for surveillance cameras to cover all public areas of District buildings or all District activities. District surveillance cameras will not be installed in "private" areas such as restrooms, locker rooms, changing areas, private offices, or classrooms. Recordings are not public information.