

WEST BRANCH MIDDLE SCHOOL FACULTY/STAFF HANDBOOK

2023-2024



Home of the West Branch Bears

900 W. Main St.
West Branch, IA 52358
Phone: 319-643-5324
Fax: 319-643-5447

Preface

This handbook is intended to be a reference for administrative practices and procedures at West Branch Community Schools. It follows the general guidelines established in school board policy. The more familiar you are with the contents of this and other handbooks, the smoother the year will go for everyone. Keep this with the *Student Handbook*, *School Improvement Plan*, *Activity Handbook* and *Emergency Procedures Manual* so that you will have access to necessary information for yourself and your students.

104.01 ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The West Branch Community School District offers career and technical programs in the following areas of study:

- Agricultural Business & Management
- Construction Trades
- Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General
- Business Education (new, replacing Family & Consumer Science)

It is the policy of the West Branch Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have any questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the district's Equity Coordinator, Dave Hlas, Elementary Principal, 148 North Oliphant St., West Branch, IA 52358, 319-643-7211, dhlas@west-branch.k12.ia.us.

Vision, Mission and Destination of West Branch Community Schools

Vision: A Future Focused Community of Learners

Mission: Preparing Students to Live and Learn with Passion and Purpose

Destination: All Students will be Career and College Ready

MASTER CONTRACT AND SUPPORT STAFF HANDBOOK

Please consult the [Faculty Master Contract or Support Staff Handbook](#) for additional information.

ABSENCES (Employee)

Contact HS Secretary, Ruth Farmer, between 6:00-6:30 A.M. in the event of illness or some other emergency on a workday. The phone number is 319-430-0381 or 319-643-7377. For all other absences a request for leave will be turned in to the building principal prior to such leave.

Please avoid planned absences during professional development. The community has given us this time to focus on improving our instructional practices.

When substitutes cannot be found, other staff members are enlisted to cover for missing teachers. Both colleagues and other substitutes very much appreciate organized lesson plans with meaningful work for students to complete.

It is well worth your time to review behavior expectations with your class prior to an absence. A class that is accustomed to working throughout the period is much easier for substitutes to supervise.

Keep in mind that the Master Contract covers all leaves. Exceptions must be worked out with the Superintendent.

ABSENCES (Student) – TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

As teachers, the key to the success of this policy can be found in these areas:

1. Making each class a worthwhile experience (when a student misses class, he/she misses material that they must know.)
2. Students understand from day one that when they miss class they will be responsible for the work they have missed.
3. Being accurate when attendance is being taken. **Attendance must be taken at the beginning of each class and recorded in PowerSchool.**
4. Have procedures in place for students to find missing work and schedule missed assessments.

Attendance will be taken each period. The office secretary will have a complete record of attendance based on your reports. If, at any time, you feel it necessary to check student records, these are available. Keep the office informed of any students who are missing your class and need further follow-up regarding attendance.

ACCIDENT REPORTS

Any accident that occurs on the school grounds should be reported ASAP to the school nurse in writing. This is valid for both students and staff accidents. **Unusual occurrence** report forms can be obtained from the building office. Accident reports must be filled out by adult witnesses. Considering insurance settlements and the possibility of litigation, the need for accurate and complete written records is vital.

All accidents and illness must be reported to the office immediately.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) is given in grades 3-11 each spring. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment is given in grades 5-8, in the fall and the spring. Look for information from the principal's office regarding testing windows.

ASSEMBLIES

Organizations may, with administrative approval, organize school assemblies or special activities for the student body. Faculty will usually be given at least a week advance notice for planning purposes. These activities will be publicized on the office activity calendar. Students are not to be excused from assemblies unless their parents have made arrangements in advance for supervision on school grounds.

ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

The majority of our 7th and 8th grade students participate in school athletics. If a 7th or 8th grade student is not making adequate progress in any course, he/she becomes ineligible to compete in school activities starting on Wednesday of the following week after parent/guardian notification. Ineligible students are encouraged to stay after school to work on academics with a teacher rather than practice for activities. Students that receive ineligibility notices will be on the restricted study hall list for the time during which they are ineligible. Students will immediately become eligible when they demonstrate sufficient progress. The school principal will make the final decision regarding eligibility.

BUDGET

You must complete a purchase order for all expenses. Throughout the year, you may order additional supplies according to your department's line item budget. Teacher requests for next year's department budgets are submitted several months before school ends since most purchases are processed in July. Once the Central Office has approved the building budget, you may submit a purchase order for all approved purchases. All technology requests, including computer software, need to be approved by the technology director in order to insure compatibility.

If you receive prior approval from the principal, you may on rare occasions use your personal funds to pay for expenses incurred while on school business and request reimbursement. Never direct students to buy things with their own money.

BULLETIN AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The middle school produces a news bulletin for middle school students and their families twice per week. This will be emailed to families on Tuesdays and Fridays. Please have information to the Administrative Assistant by 8:00 on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The middle school activity calendar is found online. Please notify the secretary if you have an event that you want to post.

COPY MACHINE USE

The copy machine is available for staff use at any time. Due to sensitive documents being printed, we do not allow students to access the copy machine/printer without permission. Please do NOT send students to make classroom copies without prior arrangements with Ellen.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management includes all routine procedures. Classroom expectations should be explicitly taught to students and practiced. A range of consequences for not meeting expectations is recommended.

Staff may assign detention, restriction and other penalties as logical consequences for student misbehavior. Disruptive behavior that necessitates a student's removal from a class may result in a conference with the principal. Detention slips are available from Ellen.

Note: When a student is assigned a **detention**, he/she is responsible to serve it as stipulated. Parents must be informed and students will be allowed at least 24 hours to arrange for transportation. The teacher will be expected to inform the office of the detention and is also to supervise his/her own detentions unless

arrangements have been made with other staff or the principal. Students who fail to complete this penalty in a timely fashion will receive additional consequences including loss of rec time, additional detention time, or in-school suspension.

CLOTHING

Staff are expected to present themselves in a professional manner above and beyond the expectations for students posted in the student handbook. If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of specific clothing, please ask the principal.

CURRICULUM

WBCSD has a guaranteed curriculum. You must consult with your department if you wish to make changes to content, materials or sequencing as this could cause a ripple effect.

In addition, weekly instructional lesson plans are to be provided to special education and learning strategies instructors.

DISRUPTION/INSUBORDINATION:

When a student is causing a substantial disruption to the classroom, it may be appropriate to send the student to the office. All students sent to the office for behavioral referrals will be required to complete a behavior reflection form. This student must then conference with the teacher before they are allowed to return to class the following day. The student needs to make time to meet with the teacher, that does not disrupt the teacher's schedule or teaching. If this does not happen prior to the next day the student will report to the office during that class period every day until a conference with that teacher occurs. Administrative Assistant will record the student's name, class name, and reason for office referral. Staff will need to indicate whether or not a principal conference is required or merely a time-out. Staff will need to complete a PowerSchool behavior management report for any behavior concerns.

Students who refuse to follow the reasonable directives of faculty and staff and students or who willfully disrupt the learning of others may be removed from class until such time as they are prepared to resume their proper role in the classroom. Repeated offenses in these areas will result in penalties to include a parent conference, counseling sessions, suspension and placement in an alternative education setting. The principal will notify parents when a student is sent to the office three or more times for the same offense.

Suspensions will usually take place in-school. However, space and supervision for in-schools is limited and when unavailable students will be sent home. Serious disruption, threats and dangerous behavior will result in out-of-school suspensions and law enforcement may be notified.

If a student shows over time that he or she is unwilling to comply with the reasonable expectations of faculty and staff or is unable to abide by the policies established by the school board and administration, then stronger disciplinary consequences will follow. Any threat to the safety and well being of other members of the school community will also result in stronger disciplinary action. This may include suspension, removal from classes as well as referral to local law enforcement. The teacher who sent the student to the office for discipline will notify parents. The administration will ensure that students receive due process.

E-MAIL

Please remember that all email communication is public. Parents have a legal right to see any communication regarding their child. If you would not be willing to post the statement on a public bulletin board, you should not make the statements in an email. Email is a limited form of communication. If a topic is sensitive or emotional, it is always best to speak in person.

[Board Policy 401.13 Staff Technology Use/Social Networking](#)

[Board Policy 603.16A Acceptable Use Policy](#)

EMERGENCY PACKETS

Each classroom has an emergency packet with information regarding fire, severe weather, security, and other emergency procedures. Please review these materials. Fire and Tornado routes should be posted in each classroom near the doorway. **Emergency packets should include class lists.**

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FIRE DRILLS

1. Warning – fire alarm signal
2. Don't panic – move briskly to the designated area – do not allow children to run or shove
2. Teachers will take roll. Remain there quietly until all clear signal is given.
3. All persons are responsible for standing at least the height of the building away from it
4. Written directions are posted in each classroom.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR DISASTER DRILLS

1. Warning – severe weather signal
2. Don't panic – move briskly but do not allow children to run or shove
3. If your class is assigned to the hallway, sit on the floor, and face the lockers. Stay away from all windows and doors.
4. Everyone needs to be as quiet as possible so directions and information can be heard by everyone.
5. Teachers will take roll after you have moved to the sheltered areas.
6. Any person outside the school building at the time of an alarm should proceed to the nearest building and follow the appropriate procedures.

7. The town signal for a disaster is a long steady siren. If this blows, proceed as though the school alarm has been sounded.
8. If you are loading or unloading from the buses, follow your driver to a safe location.

EVALUATION/OBSERVATION

Each fall, your building administrator will provide you with information regarding your evaluation, observation and individual professional development plan responsibilities. A copy of the district evaluation plan is available on the district website. Please review the master contract for additional information.

FACULTY LOUNGE

Clean up after yourself in the lounge area. Custodians will clean the floor. The rest is up to those using the facility. If you choose to eat school lunch in the lounge, remember to return your tray, etc. to the kitchen. The refrigerator and microwave need to be cleaned when a spill happens. If your intention is to use the refrigerator to store food or drink then you are expected to help maintain the cleanliness of the refrigerator.

FIELD TRIPS AND GUEST SPEAKERS

A field trip that is well planned and organized can be an excellent method of establishing the relevance of academic objectives. These should be planned well in advance and take into account key events on the school calendar. The kitchen staff needs 2 weeks notice to adapt food orders. Kitchen staff are also able to provide sack lunches to students with appropriate notice. Transportation requests should also be processed 2 weeks in advance.

Permission slips are necessary for any activity requiring transportation, outside of the district, with the exception of J-Term. If possible a parent volunteer should be recruited for every 8 or 10 students. Please discuss field trip costs with the principal.

The school encourages the use of community, government and business leaders as guest speakers and resources. When they arrive and depart they must sign in and out in the office.

GRADES/PROFICIENCY

The Middle School uses standards based grading. The purposes of standards based grading are to

- Better communicate what each student knows and is able to do according to state/national content standards
- Separately assess the influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning.

The definitions of each progress indicator are as follows:

E = Expert: The student has mastered the content/skill and/or demonstrated exemplary work.

S = Solid: The student is on track to mastering the content/skill.

C = Competent: The student work has met minimum expectations for course requirements.

N = Needs Relearning: The student work fails to meet minimum expectations and the student must reassess.

I = Insufficient Evidence: The student work is missing or incomplete.

A student that does not complete the required work for a class due to extenuating circumstances will receive an I (insufficient evidence) on the report card. It is the student's responsibility to see that the work is completed. The work is to be completed within 2 weeks after the end of the quarter.

Grades should be based on;

- Knowledge of the subject matter and ability to apply it correctly
- Demonstrated quality on selected performance criteria
- Successful achievement on individual learning goals as established by IEP or 504 Plan
- Competency on locally established standards and benchmarks
- Other factors consistent with school board policy and deemed important by the classroom professional

Teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of assigning proficiency indicators that represent student accomplishments. Staying current with assessment research is vital, and modifying classroom practices to promote greater student learning is expected of every instructor. Teachers should make plain to students the criteria and the scale for evaluation. Students respond most readily to learning situations that give them authentic feedback for improvement. Assignments that are collected should be returned as soon as possible. Students should be shown how to improve.

From time to time students or parents may question a proficiency indicator. Disputes about a student's proficiency should be resolved by the teacher whenever possible.

Parents and students will receive a written report at the end of each quarter.

No student should receive an N or I on a final report card without documentation of parent notification.

Teachers should be aware that federal and state laws involving student rights impact grading. All information regarding a student's status in the classroom should be regarded as confidential, shared only with other professionals, the student and his/her parents.

HALLWAY SUPERVISION

The hallway traffic situation, especially between classes, requires cooperation of the teachers. On the first day of school, please explain the hallway expectations. Also, explain the proper method of dismissal to the classes. Three points to emphasize are:

1. Classes are dismissed by the teacher, not the bell; and
2. Students should always walk instead of running, pushing or crowding.
3. Students should not line up at the classroom door for dismissal.

TEACHERS SHOULD TRY TO DO THESE THINGS:

1. Conclude the work of the class on time.
2. Open the door to the hallway and precede class to the hallway.
3. Stand outside the classroom door while the traffic is heaviest.
4. Supervise halls while classes are going to/returning from lunch.
5. Do not allow your students to leave class early.

Your presence in the hallway will do much to encourage proper conduct on the part of the students.

Please do not send a student out of your classroom without contacting the office.

Teachers who are in the office, the hallways or in another classroom while they have students to supervise are taking a substantial liability risk—make sure your classroom is covered by an adult if you have to leave the room for any reason.

HARASSMENT

Harassment of employees and students will not be tolerated in the school district, as outlined in board policies 403.4 and 502.8. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, racial, religious, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability and sexual harassment. Employees and students who believe they have suffered harassment shall report such matters to an investigator (see harassment complaint form and steps in appendix). Upon receiving a complaint, the investigator shall promptly and reasonably complete an investigation and pass the findings on to the superintendent who shall complete further investigation and take final action as deemed appropriate.

Investigators are as follows:

Dave Hlas
Elementary Principal
(319) 643-7211

Brian Walthart
Middle School Principal
(319) 643-5324

Sara Oswald
High School Principal
(319) 643-7216

Any action or communication (written or spoken) that is threatening/harassing or any physical or verbal activity which constitutes an attack on another member of the school community or provides reasonable cause for them to feel unsafe at school, should be corrected immediately and reported to an investigator. Penalties will range from a parent conference to suspension or a recommendation for expulsion, depending upon severity of the infraction and other factors considered significant by the building principal or superintendent. The school district has the authority to report students violating the harassment policy to law enforcement officials.

INTERVENTION

West Branch Community Schools uses a variety of methods to design intervention for students. It is intended for those students who are not making expected progress in the core curriculum, needing additional instruction or strategies to succeed. Intervention also applies to students needing additional supplemental materials to challenge their abilities. The building principal will provide teachers with information regarding specific procedures outlined in the process as student needs arise.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The classroom teacher is responsible for using instructional technology for the benefit of students. This may include the supervised use of electronic devices such as cell phones, calculators, laptops, ... for instructional purposes. Staff and student use of any personal (non-district owned) devices that will connect with our server must be approved by the district technology coordinator in order to protect the integrity of the district network. Staff is responsible for modeling appropriate technology etiquette for our students.

LEARNING STRATEGIES/AT-RISK

The WBMS Learning Strategies program is designed to provide students who need additional support, with additional support to be successful. The Learning Strategies teacher works with individual students on goal-setting and strategies for success. Eligibility criteria includes: poor grades, low achievement scores, absenteeism, lack of participation in school activities and/or family concerns. Referral to the program must be approved by the principal and school counselor.

LUNCH

As per master contract, you are provided a 30 minute duty-free lunch period. At times, the faculty has chosen to have working lunches in place of before school meetings. If you have concerns about this practice, please inform the principal.

You may purchase school lunch. Administrative Assistant will issue you an identification number and provide you with directions on how to use the identification number.

MANDATORY REPORTER

Faculty should be aware that the law requires the following in regard to child abuse:

1. That certified school employees such as teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers are mandatory reporters and are legally required to report whenever the reporter believes a child is a victim of abuse. This report is made immediately to the Department of Human Services (DHS). The school employee shall also notify the principal.
2. If a report is made to a school supervisor (i.e. building principal), the DHS must be made aware of this fact.
3. Persons making a report in good faith are immune from all civil or criminal liability.
4. Child abuse is defined in Chapter 232.68 of the Code of Iowa as harm or threatened harm occurring through:
 - a. Any non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of it, suffered by a child as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child.
 - b. The commission of any sexual offense with or to a child pursuant to chapter 709 or section 726.2, as a result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.
 - c. The failure on the part of a person responsible for the care of a child to provide for the adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for the child's health and welfare when financially able to do so when offered financial or other reasonable means to do so.
5. Child is defined as "any person under the age of 18 years".

N/I REPORT

Starting a couple of weeks into each grading period (quarter), a report will be run by the principal, which shows all 6th-8th grade students who are receiving either an N (Needs Relearning), or an I (Insufficient Evidence) for any standards assessed in each course. An automatically generated email will be sent to any student and their parents/guardians for whom this is the case, and will come from the principal. Teachers are also required to communicate with students and parents/guardians directly, as they can provide more specific information. Students and parents/guardians are also strongly encouraged to monitor PowerSchool as well. The Standards Score tab in PowerSchool is a very helpful resource to keep track of progress as well.

All 6th-8th grade core academic teachers will have thirty minutes of office hours per week, where students are strongly encouraged to meet with the applicable teachers for relearning and/or reassessment. In addition to those opportunities, we will also have a study table on Wednesdays from 1:40-3:10 PM, where students will be in a supervised study hall, which they are also strongly encouraged to attend, to assist them in getting off of the N/I report in subsequent weeks.

OFFICE HOURS

All 6th-8th grade core academic teachers will have a weekly thirty minute block for office hours for any students who need additional support.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Materials are available in the office for teacher use. Contact the secretary for materials as you need them. If students will be using these materials for class projects you, as the teacher, are responsible for obtaining the materials from the secretary and distributing them to the students in your classes.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Iowa Teaching Standards One, Five, and Eight each include criteria indicating the responsibility for connecting with parents. The Board of Education and the Administration encourage open, honest communication between staff, students, and community members. Anytime you have concerns about a student's social or academic achievement, a parent conference is highly recommended. Board policy 1003.03 relates to the process that community members are to follow when expressing dissatisfaction with a school employee.

Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year in the fall and the spring. All conferences are scheduled using *Sign-up Genius*. 5th grade conferences will be held with the student's homeroom teacher. 6th-8th grade conferences are held in the cafeteria/commons and utilize the "speed dating" format.

PAYROLL

Questions regarding paychecks should be directed to the business office between the hours of 8:00 and 4:30 Monday through Friday. Please call to discuss or to set up an appointment to discuss your questions. If your question involves something that does not need an immediate response, write a memo and you should receive an answer within that same week.

Paychecks are distributed on the 20th of each month or the last day school is in session before the 20th. In certain situations a check will be released sooner. See your Building Administrator for approval of early paycheck release.

PREP PERIODS

Each full time middle school teacher typically has available an average of 45 minutes a day beyond regular class instructional time. This is time to be available for educational purposes such as planning, grading, preparing materials and assisting students. If you need to be out of the building during this time, contact the principal. Absence during this time should have prior approval.

PROFESSIONAL AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

The library can offer the following services to the professional staff:

Supplying support material for student reports and projects.

Supplying support materials for class lessons.

Ordering material for preview and purchase.

Locating books for independent reading units.

Locating professional materials.

Distributing and maintaining AV equipment.

Administering a reserve reading section of titles in the library for staff only.

Assisting with in-library research units.

Administering make-up MAP tests.

Giving in-service on a group or individual basis on equipment use or library related subjects.

It will be up to you to help the library personnel stay abreast of your needs for materials to support the curriculum and of curriculum changes.

It would be appreciated if you would check out all materials from the library and return them within a reasonable time, especially if they are of high student interest.

You are encouraged to stop in to familiarize yourself with the collection or any time you need assistance in locating needed materials.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Standard Seven of the Iowa Teaching Standards contains five separate criteria to help classroom professionals guide their individual growth. Much of the district professional development work will support this standard.

All faculty course work must have prior administrative approval in order to be considered for movement on the salary schedule. The form is available in the office.

SCHOOL EVENTS IN ADULT ESTABLISHMENTS

When school-related or school-sponsored activities are held off school grounds, such events involving student participation must be held at establishments that allow separation of the student activity from individuals using alcohol. Activity sponsors are responsible for ensuring that no alcohol is consumed in the presence of students. This is not to be construed as to prohibit school-related activities off campus, such as events at restaurants, golf courses, bowling alleys or other such establishments, merely because

alcohol is served at the establishment. However, reasonable separation of such activity from students must be preserved. When possible, activities should be held within the boundaries of the school district. See board policy 1002.06.

STAFF TECHNOLOGY USE and SOCIAL NETWORKING

Computers, electronic devices and other technology are powerful and valuable education and research tools and, as such, are an important part of the instructional program. Usage of the school district's technology resources is a privilege, not a right, and that use entails responsibility. District-owned technology and district maintained social media and e-mail accounts are the property of the school district. Therefore, users of the school district's network must not expect, nor does the school district guarantee, privacy for e-mail or use of the school district's network including web sites visited. The school district reserves the right to access and view any material stored on school district equipment or any material used in conjunction with the school district's network. Employees must conduct themselves in a manner that does not disrupt from or disrupt the educational process and failure to do so will result in discipline, up to and including, discharge. [Board Policy 401.13 Staff Technology Use/Social Networking](#)

[Board Policy 603.16A Acceptable Use Policy](#)

STUDENT LOCKERS

Lockers are the property of the school district and are checked out to students as a convenience and to assist them in protecting their property. Lockers are periodically inspected to check for cleanliness and vandalism.

The student's locker and its contents may be searched when a school authority has reasonable suspicion that the locker contains illegal or contraband items. If a faculty member has reason to believe a locker contains dangerous or illegal items the principal should be notified immediately. Such searches will be conducted in the presence of another adult witness and the student.

See board policy 502.05.

TELEPHONES

All classroom telephones can be used to make school related calls. **Dial 9** for an outside line. Dial 9-911 in case of an emergency.

All personal calls should be made during prep periods, lunch, or other times when students are not in the classroom. Please refrain from using your cell phone during class and silence the phone to avoid interruption. We are modeling appropriate cell phone etiquette for our students. In case of emergency, please provide your family and friends with the school phone number.

TEXTBOOKS

All school materials are to be responsibly maintained. Textbooks are to be stamped with the West Branch stamp, numbered and condition noted prior to being distributed to students. Contact the office for guidelines and price information.

WEAPONS

Staff with knowledge that a student or students possess a dangerous weapon should report it to the principal immediately and document the referral in writing. Dangerous weapons include, but are not limited to: clubs, nunchakus, brass knuckles, knives, stun guns, BB guns, bow and arrows, toy guns (or look-alike guns used or displayed as real guns), unloaded guns and bullets. Possessing a weapon or using any object as a weapon may result in a 3- to-10 day out-of-school suspension. An expulsion hearing may also result. Possession of a firearm as defined in board policy will result in recommendation to the school board for an expulsion hearing. For additional information please read board policy 502.09.