THE CATAMOUNT SCHOOL

Parent and Student Handbook

2025-2026

Mission

The Catamount School is a learning community where all students are valued and care for themselves and others. We promote health and wellness and a commitment to learning through experience in a caring, collaborative, and socially just environment.

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Daily Operations

The Catamount School (TCS) will operate from 8:00-3:00 for students. When possible, TCS will follow the same school calendar as adopted by the Jackson County Board of Education (BOE). This includes Early Dismissals, Breaks/Holidays, and Teacher Workdays. If Jackson County Public Schools (JCPS) has a delay or an unscheduled early dismissal due to inclement weather, TCS will follow the same operating hours.

Advisors

Every Catamount student will have an adult advisor. The advisor's role is to give the student someone to talk to and check-in with should problems arise with school or other issues. The primary advisor is the students' homeroom teacher. Other advisors may be assigned for additional support.

Arrival-Dismissal

See also Transportation

Car riders will utilize the traffic circle at Camp and be dropped at the main entrance. Students should not be dropped off before 7:30 AM and are not supervised before 7:30 AM. Upon arrival, students should report directly to TCS classrooms. Students arriving by bus are directed to go straight to TCS classrooms via the main entrance of Camp. Late arrivals should enter at the Camp main entrance and report to the office for check-in.

During afternoon dismissal, students who ride the bus will be escorted to the bus lot. Students who are being picked up by car will be escorted to the pick-up. Students not picked up by 3:30 will wait at the main office.

Attendance & Tardies

Attendance at TCS and participation in class are integral parts of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Through regular attendance, students develop patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. Regular attendance by every student is mandatory. The State of North Carolina requires that every child between the ages of 7 (or younger if enrolled) and 16 attend school. Parents and legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

When a student must miss school, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be presented to the student's teacher on the day the student returns after an absence. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a physician. An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons:

- personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school,
- isolation ordered by the State Board of Health,
- death in the immediate family,
- medical or dental appointment,
- participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding,
- a minimum of two days each academic year for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s),
- participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page, with prior approval from the principal,
- pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary, or
- visitation with the student's parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the superintendent or designee, if the parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 4050, Children of Military Families, and (b) has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting or
- short-term out-of-school suspensions

In the case of absences and short-term suspension, the student will be permitted to make up his or her work. The teachers will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are

due and completing them within the specified time. Students are strongly encouraged to participate online/remotely if they cannot be physically present in class if such an option exists at the time of the absence.

A student will not be marked absent if they are participating in a school-related activity such as a field trip, school club, or ISS. Work and assignments will need to be made up under the same policy as an excused absence.

Students are expected to be at school on time and be present at the scheduled starting time for each class. Students who are excessively tardy to school or class may be at risk for failing.

The principal or designee shall notify parents and take all other steps required by North Carolina General Statute (NCGS) §115C-378 for excessive absences. If a student is absent from school for five or more days in a semester, the principal or committee shall review other measures of academic achievement, the circumstances of the absences, the number of absences, and the extent to which the student completed missed work. A committee may recommend to the principal, and the principal may make any of the following determinations:

- the student will not receive a passing grade for the grading period,
- the student will receive the grade otherwise earned, or
- the student will be given additional time to complete the missed work before a determination of the appropriate grade is made. The student will receive an "incomplete" in the course/subject until work is completed. If work is not completed by a designated date set by the principal or committee, then the student will not receive a passing grade for the missing work.

Students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt from this policy in compliance with NCGS §115C-378.

Bullying

Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, repeated and targeted behavior that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic or motivated by an individual's association with a person who has or is perceived to have a differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability. Examples of behavior that may constitute bullying or harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, lewd propositions, exclusion from peer groups, extortion of money or possessions, implied or stated threats, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching, or any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults, such as derogatory posters or cartoons. Legitimate age-appropriate pedagogical techniques are not considered harassment or bullying. Harassment, including sexual or gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. Harassment may occur between members of the opposite sex or the same sex. Students, parents, volunteers, visitors, or others are also strongly encouraged to report any actual or suspected incidents of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. All reports should be made to the principal or an appropriate teacher. Reports may be made anonymously through the Say Something anonymous reporting system, and all reports shall be investigated in accordance with TCS discrimination, harassment, and bullying policy.

Cafeteria

Students will eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria at Camp. Payment and charges should be coordinated with the JCPS school nutrition staff.

Cat Cards

Students will be issued a Cat Card for identification purposes. The Cat Card is also used for using resources at Hunter Library on Western Carolina University's (WCU) campus. The card will not contain any personal data beyond the student's name, either on the magnetic strip or printed on the face of the card.

Cell Phones, Backpacks, & Other Bags

It is understood that smartphones are often provided to students by their parents/guardians. Phones can disrupt the educational process. To facilitate responsible use, phones must be in the student's backpack unless authorized by a staff member. Backpacks and all other bags will be stored under student's chairs in the metal basket during each class. Unauthorized use may result in a minor discipline, application of the code of conduct, or confiscation for parent pick-up.

Contact During School Hours

Messages to students shall be conveyed through TCS's front office (828-227-7500). Parents wishing to visit or pick up/drop off their student during school hours **must** check-in at the front office of TCS located at Camp. Catamount School personnel will direct and/or escort the parent/student to TCS classrooms.

Dress Code and Appearance

The personal appearance of students reflects students' pride in themselves and their school. Therefore, dress should be appropriate for an educational setting and help create a good learning environment. That is, dress and personal appearance should not interfere with or distract students and faculty from teaching and learning. Extremes in hairstyles, body art, and modes of dress deemed by the principal to be clearly inappropriate or which tend to disrupt or distract from the educational process will not be permitted. Students who fail to comply will remain in a separate environment until the student's appearance is not disruptive. Parents will be contacted if necessary. A second or repeated violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action. The following rules must be followed:

- Any clothing that disrupts the teaching/learning process is considered inappropriate.
- Clothing must completely cover the shoulders and extend to mid-thigh without exposing bare skin.
- All students must avoid wearing see-through, midriff, bareback, or cut-off shirts.
- A shirt must be worn under athletic jerseys.
- Students are expected to wear their shorts or pants fastened around their waist, and shorts or skirts should extend to mid-thigh or longer.
- No large or heavy chains or spikes that could be used as a weapon may be worn on school grounds.
- Student's clothing shall be free of inappropriate or suggestive slogans and pictures, including any depiction of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products and sexually or racially offensive messages or images.
- No caps, hats, or head coverings will be worn inside the building unless permission is given by the principal or teacher.

Extra Services

Students who are formally identified as EC (Exceptional Children), AIG (Academically-Intellectually Gifted), or EL (English Learner) are entitled to services, and those services will be provided through licensed professionals through either WCU or a contracted agent. Details of those services will be provided to the relevant parties.

Students who receive services through Meridian, Blue Ridge Health, or other outside agencies may be able to receive those services at schools, which will be coordinated on an individual basis.

Field Trips

School field trips may be planned to help meet educational goals and objectives by connecting learning with experiences outside of the classroom environment. All eligible students will be given an opportunity to participate in school trips and will not be denied participation based on economic hardship or disability. Additional guidelines apply to trips that involve an overnight stay, out-of-state travel, or travel beyond a 150-mile radius. Parents will be given proper notice of trip details and will provide signed consent for the student to participate in the trip. Parents will inform the school nurse or designated school employee of any healthcare-related needs for school-sponsored trips and will provide all necessary medications and/or medical supplies.

All chaperones and volunteers accompanying students on school trips must pass a WCU background check and meet the standards established by WCU. Students must adhere to all school and behavior expectations on school-sponsored trips as in any other school setting.

Grading

To determine academic progress, students are assessed and evaluated on a regular basis using a variety of measures. Progress is reported to parents and families on a regular basis. Mid-term reports are sent home at the 4 ½ weeks of each grading period. Report cards are sent home each nine weeks for students. Information about student progress is also shared through mid-term progress reports, parent-teacher conferences, student-led conferences and other parent-teacher communication.

The school will use the following 4 point scale for grading:

Exceeds Standards (4) - Student possesses a deep understanding of a standard and is able to demonstrate this by completing advanced applications of materials using a variety of formats such as, but not limited to, oral presentations, projects, rubrics, standardized assessments, and teacher-made assessments. Exceeding the standard does not mean the student is done working with the standard as activities and units may tie back into this standard.

Meets Standards (3) - Student has shown an increasing knowledge of the standard and is able to show mastery of the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class in one or two formats such as, but not limited to, oral presentations, projects, rubrics, standardized assessments, and teacher-made assessments.

Progressing (2) - Student understands the foundational materials that supports the targeted learning but is still working to master the complex materials of the class.

Emerging (1) - The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational materials for the class with help from the teacher but still struggles when working independently.

No Evidence (0) – Student has not demonstrated any understanding of the foundational materials for the class. This may be the result of non-participation in class or not attempting assignments/assessments that would otherwise be evidence of their understanding of the course standards.

Additionally, feedback for non-core instruction and behavior may be provided in the form of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U).

Homework

Homework activities may be used to reinforce skills and concepts introduced prior to the assignment. Students may be asked to read stories at home in anticipation of discussion in class. Students may be asked to complete a project or activity introduced and begun at school if the student needs more time than is expected or allotted.

Library

Students will have access to WCU's Hunter Library and be allowed to check books out using their Cat Card. Students are not allowed in the library without a parent or school staff member present. TCS has also created a school library which will be periodically accessible during ELA class.

One Call Now

TCS will utilize One Call Now to reach parents via phone calls and text alerts. If your phone number changes, please let our front office know. If you do not receive a weekly call each Sunday, please alert the front office (828-227-7500).

Organizations & Clubs

Clubs are intended to promote positive fellowship, constructive teamwork, individual responsibility, and extend the love of learning. All school clubs and organizations must have a principal-approved faculty member as a sponsor or supervisor.

Pictures/Photography

Please contact the front office of TCS through written request if you do not want your child's photograph used on the school's website, school social media, or in any other publication. No child's photograph will display the student's name (first or last).

Recess/Health/PE

Students will have PE on most regular schedule days. TCS will balance additional physical activity or recess with advisory time, academic needs, and club time. Health class will be provided on a rotation with PE.

School Safety

TCS will participate in safety drills (Fire, Tornado, Lockdown) TCS will create and maintain a School Crisis Plan in coordination with the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. A school crisis kit will be maintained for the staff of TCS. Student/Parent contact information will be secured in the TCS crisis kit to ensure the proper authorities can reach parents or other emergency contact numbers in the event of a crisis.

Student Health & Medications

TCS will have a school nurse who will be on campus 2 days a week. The school will meet the same health and safety standards as any public school. Students in need of daily medication or those who must carry medication on their persons must complete the medication form (sites.google.com/view/catamount-commons/for-parents). Medication must be stored in the office if it is not required to be carried, such as an emergency inhaler. Carrying unauthorized medication, even over-the-counter medication not requiring a prescription, is a violation of the school code of conduct. Emergency Epinephrine will be available on-site, and medical assistance will be available on a consistent basis. Additional information is available about health requirements for school entry, medications at school, individual health care plans, health screenings, and information about Garrett's Law and other required/recommended immunizations. Please contact the school nurse to discuss the health care needs of your child in the school setting.

Technology

Students are provided with a laptop owned and serviced by WCU. Options for device insurance will be provided when the laptops are initially assigned. Device Insurance is highly recommended as students are responsible for fees to cover damaged or lost devices and/or chargers.

Because students will be using TCS owned technology and using WCU internet services, students are expected to follow TCS technology use policy (Technology Responsible Use – please visit this link and click on the policy) Use of a laptop is a privilege that may be revoked should a student use the laptop for inappropriate purposes such as bullying, spreading inappropriate imagery, or any other behavior that violates the school's Code of Conduct. Loss of laptop privileges will be determined by the principal and may be for a limited time or the remainder of the year based upon the severity of the violation.

Testing

TCS believes that an effective testing and assessment program evaluates the progress of individual students and helps ensure that educational goals and objectives are being met for every child. A testing program also assists in the continued refinement of the instructional program. In addition, data from tests and assessments provide measures of student learning that are useful for evaluating educator effectiveness. The principal shall develop security and administration procedures for the state testing program and other assessments that are consistent with State BOE requirements and relevant law.

All annual assessments of student achievement adopted by the State BOE or other applicable law and all final exams for high school credit courses will be administered within the school year's final ten instructional days.

At the end of each school year, students in grades 6-8 are required by North Carolina to take end-of-grade (EOG) tests in math and reading. Students in 8th grade also take the science EOG test. Students who complete high school credit Math I in 8th grade take the Math I end-of-course (EOC) assessment which will count as 25% of the student's final grade. 8th Grade students taking Math I will not be required to take the 8th grade Math EOG. Students may also take final exams in non-EOG areas such as social studies and science. Additional tests and assessments will be given to students who are English Language Learners. High School credit may also be earned for Earth and Environmental Science.

Title I School

TCS receives Title I funding. The Title I program is a federally supported program that offers assistance to educationally and economically disadvantaged children to help ensure they receive an equitable, high-quality, well-rounded education and meet the school system's challenging academic standards. The Title I program provides instructional activities and supportive services to eligible students over and above those provided by the regular school program.

Parents of students in Title I schools have the right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instructs their child. The principal will provide you with this information in a timely manner upon your written request to TCS's office. Specifically, you have the right to request the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers and/or teacher assistants:

- Whether the teacher has met North Carolina qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency license or waiver through which the state qualifications or licensing criteria have been waived.

- The bachelor's degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field or discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Parents will be notified if their child is being taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not Highly Qualified.

Transportation

Car Riders:

Students should be dropped off and picked up at the main entrance of TCS located at Camp. Students who arrive after the school day has begun must enter at the main office and sign in. Car rider doors open at 7:30 AM. No supervision is provided prior to 7:30 AM. Students should report directly to class after 7:30 AM. Students arriving after 7:55 must enter at the main office entrance and sign in.

Bus Riders:

Bus transportation is provided and managed by the JCPS Transportation Department. Routes, pick-up/drop-off locations, and times will be assigned by JCPS. Students may be transported to other campuses or approved locations and/or switch buses to reach their final destination.

Students are expected to adhere to bus safety and conduct rules as explained by the principal and/or designee and the bus driver. Failure to adhere to bus safety and conduct rules may result in suspension from riding a school bus. Riding a school bus is not a legal entitlement; it is a service provided for students by JCPS.

Bus stops and pick-up/drop-off times are assigned by JCPS. Stop locations and times may change as needed to ensure safe and efficient transportation services. Riders should be at their stop at least five minutes ahead of the assigned time. Drivers may not wait on late students. Buses will only transport riders who have been assigned to the bus. Students may not invite friends to ride the bus with them. The following rules apply on the bus:

1. Passengers will enter the school bus, take their seats quickly and remain seated. They will refrain from moving around or changing seats in the bus when it is in motion.
2. Passengers will keep all body parts inside the bus at all times.
3. Passengers will not throw objects inside the bus or out the window.
4. Passengers will not shout, wave or gesture to pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles from the bus windows.
5. Passengers will not bring glass bottles, stones, sticks, snakes, animals, bullets, weapons or toy guns, or anything considered dangerous on buses.
6. Passengers are not allowed to bring any items on the school bus that will compromise the safety of other passengers or are against school rules.
7. Passengers will not eat, drink or chew gum while riding on a school bus.
8. Passengers will keep the aisle clear and never pile books, musical instruments, lunch boxes or other objects in the aisle.
9. Passengers will not use profane or vulgar language or gestures, tobacco or alcoholic beverages while riding on a bus.
10. Passengers will not be loud, boisterous or distract the driver's attention in any way.
11. Passengers will maintain complete silence at all railroad crossings.
12. Passengers will not fight, play or scuffle on the school bus.
13. Passengers will not tamper with the emergency exits or any other part of the bus.
14. Passengers will not mar or deface the bus in any way. Students will be required to pay for any damage.
15. Passengers will not tamper with fire extinguishers or first aid supplies.
16. No person will ride a bus unless assigned to it by the principal or designee.
17. Passengers will not litter the school bus and will help keep it clean.
18. Passengers must use safety belts if available on the bus.

Other Notices

- All posters and announcements to be displayed in the school must first be approved by the principal or school staff member.
- Students may not sell items at school unless the sale is a part of an approved school-related fundraiser.
- All State and Federal laws apply on campus.
- TCS will be accessible to youth groups such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Groups wishing to speak to the staff and/or students of TCS should first contact the principal to schedule a time that would not interfere with general instructional time.

Academic Program

As our guiding principles, TCS uses the Criteria for Schools to Watch by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (http://middlegradesforum.org/our-criteria/). These criteria represent a consensus among educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations committed to promoting the academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents. The four essential criteria are:

- **Academic excellence:** High-performing schools with middle grades are academically excellent. They challenge all students to use their minds well.
- **Developmentally responsive**: High-performing schools with middle grades are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.
- **Socially equitable:** High-performing schools with middle grades are socially equitable, democratic, and fair. They provide every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. They keep positive options open for all students.
- **Organizational structure:** High-performing schools with middle grades are learning organizations that establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

In particular, TCS emphasizes the following instructional core values:

- We value experiential learning toward deep understanding.
- We are dedicated to the health and well-being of young adolescents with an intentional focus on social and emotional development.
- We seek to build a democratic community, embracing social justice.
- We work to develop cultural responsiveness within and outside of our learning community.
- We embrace the ideals of student-centered assessment.
- We seek to build family and community alliances.

The Chancellor, or designee, shall establish the standard course of study for TCS. This course of study shall set forth the subjects to be taught in each grade and the texts and other educational materials on each subject to be used in each grade. The Chancellor, or designee, shall design its programs to meet student performance standards designated by the State BOE, the UNC Board of Governors, and the NC General Assembly.

Students will take all assessments required by the State BOE. The EOG's in Reading, Math and 8th Grade Science will be given during the last ten days of the school year. TCS will have a North Carolina School Report Card issued in the fall of each school year.

Nine Week grading periods are listed on TCS's calendar. TCS will not use a traditional grading scale. The school and staff will use standards given by DPI to show student proficiency. Students will be identified as Exceeds Standards (4), Meets Standards (3), Progressing (2), Emerging (1), or No Evidence (0). For concise reporting, not all standards will be listed on report cards and progress reports. Report Cards and Progress Reports will list standards being instructed and refined during that given period covered by the report.

Attendance is mandatory. Students who are absent need to provide written notes excusing the absence. Notes may be signed by a parent, guardian, or medical professional. Students who miss more than 5 days per semester may be required to make up time lost after or before school. Excessive absences may also result in retention as determined by the staff and dean.

TCS will work with faculty/staff members at WCU to ensure that students identified with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP), a 504 plan, or as English Learner (EL) receive the services that they are entitled to receive. Students and their families with those plans should be in contact with the school staff if there is any confusion regarding how services are being provided.

Math 1 Placement

Placement in Integrated Math 1 for high school credit at the 8th grade level will be considered based upon multiple indicators, including but not limited to student coursework and assessment data in 7th grade, teacher/principal recommendation, and parent approval. 8th graders scoring below a level 4 on the Math 1 assessments will retake Math 1 upon entering a JCPS secondary school.

Community of Care, MTSS, & PBIS

At TCS, it is recognized that meeting the academic and behavioral, social, and emotional needs of all students will require the efforts of a team. This team will consist of a core set of school and university personnel who will meet regularly to address class-wide and individual needs at various levels. Other individuals from the university and community will join this team as needed to address more specific needs. The goal is to provide a "Community of Care" that will support all students' class-wide and unique school needs.

The Community of Care will operate within a three-tier system consistent with a Multi-Tiered System Support (MTSS) model, including the following activities:

Tier 1: Class-wide Core Instructional Activities

- Assist teachers in gathering individual student data on interests and concerns to assist with core instruction development
- Assist teachers in developing and implementing core instruction with differentiation as needed
- Assist teachers in monthly progress monitoring data collection related to class-wide student academic and social/emotional progress.
- Review and analyze progress monitoring data to identify a need for changes in core instruction and/or need for additional student support. Focus will be on the level of performance as well as the rate of progress.

Tier 2: Small-group Supplemental Intervention Activities

- Use classroom progress monitoring data and other data available to identify students who meet specific academic and/or behavioral emotional criteria indicating a need for small group interventions to address these needs
- Assist teachers in identifying additional data needed to understand the needs of students identified as needing additional small-group interventions, including student feedback on their needs
- Assist teachers in identifying goals for level of performance or rate of progress and developing and implementing small group interventions to address the needs identified
- Assist teachers in measuring fidelity of intervention implementation.
- Assist teachers in weekly progress monitoring data collection related to small group intervention implementation
- Review and analyze progress monitoring data to identify a need for change to small group interventions and/or need additional student support.

Tier 3: Individual Intensive Intervention Activities

- Use small group progress monitoring data and other data available to identify students who have received academic and/or behavioral emotional small group interventions but have not met the goals set for the level of performance or rate of progress indicating need for individual student interventions to address these needs
- Assist teachers in identifying additional data needed to understand the needs of the individual child identified as needing an individual intervention including student feedback on their needs
- Assist teachers in identifying goals for level of performance or rate of progress for individual students and develop and implement individual interventions to address the need identified
- Assist teachers in measuring fidelity of intervention implementation.
- Assist teachers in weekly progress monitoring data collection related to individual intervention implementation

- Review and analyze progress monitoring data to identify a need for change to individual interventions and/or need for additional student supports.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- Along with academic interventions, individual, small group, and whole-group incentives are used to positively reinforce behavior and social-emotional outcomes. At TCS, students earn incentives for positive contributions, including model behavior, attendance, and academic fulfillment at the individual level.
- Incentives may include school-organized activities and student-selected activities or rewards.

State level resources for parents can be found here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/parents- corner/multi-tiered-systems-support-mtss-families

Standards of Behavior & Code of Conduct

Authority of School Personnel

Discipline is the responsibility of all school personnel. The principal will assign authority roles. The school principal has the authority and responsibility to investigate and take appropriate action regarding any antisocial or criminal student behavior and any other behavior appropriately referred to him/her.

The teacher has the authority and responsibility to manage student behavior in the classroom and while students are under his/her supervision. Any physical or verbal disturbance within the learning environment and which interrupts or interferes with the teaching and learning process or with the orderly conduct of school activity is prohibited. Students shall behave respectfully towards and in the presence of school employees and other students. Students will comply with all directions of the principal, teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, teacher assistants, bus drivers, and all other school personnel who are authorized to give such directions during any period of time when they are subject to the authority of such personnel. No school employee shall be civilly liable for using reasonable force in conformity with State law, State or local rules, or State or local policies regarding the control, discipline, suspension, and expulsion of students.

General Discipline Philosophy

At TCS, we believe good discipline is essential to good learning; each student has the right to be free from distractions caused by others' inappropriate behavior. We believe this can be established using the principles of a democratic community and restorative justice. A democratic community approach to classroom management involves attention to relationships with and among learners and an intentional effort to create a climate of mutual caring and respect; a positive view of learners, including their inclination toward and motivation for learning and their responsiveness to kind and respectful treatment, consideration of each learner and his/her subsequent behavior within the social context of the classroom. Day to day practices that generate community in the democratic classroom involve learners, teachers, and school personnel getting to know each other; involve learners setting mutually agreed upon classroom expectations for behavior, and teachers and peers support learners in meeting expectations through teaching expectations, reminding, redirecting and re-teaching expectations as needed. Regular classroom and school meetings are designed to foster school community involvement. Through problem-solving and sharing experiences, students learn and practice social skills such as listening to and responding positively to each other, showing empathy, and generating solutions to problems. Class meetings involve the following:

- share acknowledgment and appreciation for positive behaviors that sustain and enhance the learning community.
- acknowledge and generate solutions for problems and concerns that affect the learning community. Solutions are ideas generated by students that support learners in the community and work to resolve and prevent problems from reoccurring. The focus is on solutions rather than consequences or punishment. students share their life experiences.
- students plan classroom experiences such as field trips and service-learning opportunities.

For problems that interfere with the learning community and the health and well-being of individual students beyond that which can be handled through class meetings or staff/student conferences, staff will work to identify early warning signs of problems that interfere with learning and the functioning of the learning community, safety, health

and well-being of students. Staff will develop personalized growth plans to prevent problems from escalating and/or remediate problematic behavior.

When individuals in the learning community display disrespectful, hurtful or harmful behavior to their peers or the community at large, the teacher and student work together to identify appropriate restitution to make amends.

TCS expects its students to behave in a socially acceptable and responsible manner and believes there must exist a climate conducive to learning and respect for oneself, other people, and property for a school to meet student needs satisfactorily. TCS staff will maintain a positive behavior support system to model and encourage constructive methods of correcting and managing student behavior. When possible, TCS will engage and involve resources from the university, public school system, and community resources and organizations to identify and correct root problems of behavior and disruption of the educational process. It is a goal of TCS to have students in school as much as possible and avoid drop-outs, suspensions, and expulsions.

This code of conduct is based on these principles and is provided to students and parents (including legal or custodial guardians) in an effort to ensure a safe and wholesome learning environment for all students. The principal or designee may reduce or increase the penalty when there is a finding of mitigating circumstances, except in cases where law or policy requires suspension. All decisions related to student behavior are guided by the objectives to teach responsibility and respect for cultural and ideological differences and by a commitment to create safe, orderly, and caring schools where learning continuously occurs. Students have the responsibility to comply with school rules, to pursue a prescribed course of study, and to submit to the lawful authority of teachers, staff, school officials, and the law.

While this Policy is intended to provide notice to students and parents of general expectations for behavior and consequences for misconduct, it must be understood that discretion will be used in dealing with a wide range of age and maturity of students. Consideration must also be given to the seriousness of the infraction(s) when determining the consequences' severity. Other inappropriate behavior not covered in this document will be dealt with by the principal and/or designee.

Please refer to the following policies. Go the drop-down menu for General Policies & Handbook on the Catamount School Information page.

- Student Code of Conduct and Behavior Policy
- Suspension/Expulsion Policy
- Student Discipline Hearing Procedures Policy
- Bullying and Non-Discrimination Policy
- Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures
- Students Discipline-Restraint - Disability Discipline Policy
- Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities
- Rights of Students with Disabilities
- Weapons and Explosives Prohibited Policy
- Threat Safety Policy

Administration Responsibilities

When a student has been suspended (ISS or OSS), they may not participate in extracurricular/school activities with TCS during the suspension. Corporal punishment shall not be used at TCS. Corporal punishment is the intentional infliction of physical pain upon the body of a student as a disciplinary measure. It includes, but is not limited to, spanking, paddling, and slapping.

Short-Term Suspension

A short-term suspension is the disciplinary exclusion of a student from attending his or her school for up to 10 school days. A student who is placed on a short-term suspension will not be permitted to be on school property or to take part in any school function during the period of suspension without prior approval from the principal. Short-term suspension procedures:

• The principal must first provide the student with notice of the opportunity for an informal hearing. The principal may hold the hearing immediately after giving the student oral or written notice of the charges against him or her. At the hearing, the student has the right to be present, be informed of the charges, and the basis of the accusation, and make statements in defense or mitigation of the charges.

• The principal may impose a short-term suspension without providing notice and the opportunity for a hearing if the presence of the student creates a direct and immediate threat to the safety of other students or staff, or substantially disrupts or interferes with the education of other students or the maintenance of discipline at the school. In such cases, the principal shall give the student notice of the charges and an informal hearing opportunity as soon as practicable.
• The principal's decision to impose short-term suspension is not appealable to the leadership team.
• The initial notice may be by telephone, but it must be followed by a timely written notice. The written notice must include all of the information listed above and may be sent by fax, email, or any other method reasonably designed to give actual notice.
• Any student who has received a short-term suspension (10 days or less) will be afforded the following: - The opportunity to take textbooks home for the duration of the suspension - The right to inquire about homework assignments for the duration of the suspension The opportunity to take any quarterly, semester, or grading period examinations missed during the suspension period

Long-Term Suspension

A long-term suspension is the disciplinary exclusion of a student from attending his or her assigned school for more than 10 school days. Disciplinary reassignment of a student to a full-time educational program that meets the academic requirements of the standard course of study established by the State BOE and that provides the student with the opportunity to make timely progress toward graduation and grade promotion is not a long-term suspension requiring the due process procedures set out in this policy.

Upon the recommendation of the principal, the Dean of the College of Education & Allied professions (CEAP), who is the Chancellor's Designee, may impose a long-term suspension on a student who willfully engages in a serious violation of the Code of Student Conduct and the violation either threatens the safety of students, staff or school visitors or threatens to substantially disrupt the educational environment. The principal may recommend long-term suspension for a minor violation if aggravating circumstances justify treating the student's behavior as a serious violation.

Long-term suspension procedures: Only the Chancellor's Designee/Superintendent has the authority to long-term suspend a student. Long-term suspension may carry into the next school year if the offense occurs during the final quarter of the school year. The suspension may include a period up to the remainder of the school year in which the offense was committed and the first semester of the following school year. Before a student can be long-term suspended, the student must be provided with an opportunity for a hearing. Students who are long-term suspended must be offered alternative educational services unless the team has a significant or important reason for declining to offer such services. The following are considered significant or important reasons:

- Student exhibits violent or criminal behavior
- Student poses a threat or significant risk to staff or other students
- Student substantially disrupts the learning process
- Student otherwise engaged in serious misconduct that makes the provisions of alternative educational services not feasible
- Educationally appropriate alternative education services are not available in the local school administrative unit due to limited resources
- Student failed to comply with reasonable conditions for admittance into an alternative education program.

If a teacher is assaulted or injured by a student and as a result, the student is long-term suspended or reassigned to alternative education services, the student shall not be returned to that teacher's classroom unless the teacher consents.

Disciplinary reassignment of a student to a full-time educational program that meets the academic requirements of the standard course of study and provides the student with the opportunity to make timely progress toward graduation and grade promotion (i.e., alternative school) is not a long-term suspension requiring the long-term suspension due process requirement.

The team shall offer alternative education services to any student who receives a long-term or 365-day suspension unless the team provides a significant or important reason for declining to offer such services. Alternative education services are part-time or full-time programs that provide direct, written, or computer-based instruction to allow the student to progress in one or more core academic courses. See Catamount School Policy 4353 and 4370.

Expulsion

An expulsion is the indefinite exclusion of a student from school enrollment for disciplinary purpose. Upon the recommendation of the team, the school may expel a student who is 14 years of age or older for misbehavior.

Expulsion procedures: Prior to expelling a student, the principal, Chancellor's Designee/Superintendent, and potentially, a disciplinary panel, must consider whether to offer alternative education services to the student. If the Chancellor's Designee/Superintendent determines that there are appropriate alternative services, the student shall be under the supervision of school personnel and/or guardian at all times.

At the time the student is expelled, he/she shall also be provided with notice of the right to petition for readmission. During the term of expulsion, unless the committee provides the student with access to alternative education services, the student cannot be present on any of the lab school's property and is not considered a student within that school system. See Catamount School Policy 4353 and 4370.

365 Day Suspension

A 365- day suspension is the disciplinary exclusion of a student from attending his or her school for 365 calendar days. The Chancellor's Designee/Superintendent may impose a 365-day suspension only for certain firearm and destructive device violations, Weapons, Bomb Threats, Terrorist Threats and Clear Threats to Safety.

The Team shall offer alternative education services to any student who receives a long- term or 365-day suspension unless the director provides a significant or important reason for declining to offer such services. Alternative education services are part-time or full-time programs that provide direct or computer-based instruction to allow the student to progress in one or more core academic courses. See Catamount School Policy 4353 and 4370.

Notice to Parents for Long-Term Suspension, 365 Day Suspension, Expulsion

The principal must provide to the student's parent written notice of the recommendation for long-term suspension, 365-day suspension or expulsion by the end of the workday during which the long-term suspension or expulsion is recommended when reasonably possible or as soon thereafter as practicable.

Appeal Process for Long-Term Suspension, 365 Day Suspension, Expulsion

The student may appeal to the board the decision not to provide alternative education services, as permitted by GS 115C-45(c)(1). Any appeal to the Chancellor's Designee must be made in writing within five days of receiving the decision.

Readmission for Long-Term Suspension

365 Day Suspension, Expulsion Readmission procedures: Students suspended for 365 days or expelled may, after 180 calendar days from the date of the suspension or expulsion, petition in writing to be readmitted. The Dean may consider any petitions for readmission. The student shall be readmitted if he/she demonstrates that his/her presence in a school no longer constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school personnel.

If the Chancellor's Designee rejects the request for readmission, the notice will advise the parents of the right to appeal the decision. Any appeal must be made in writing within five days of receipt of the superintendent's or designee's decision. See Catamount School Policy 4353 and 4370. If a teacher was assaulted or injured by a student, and as a result the student was expelled, the student shall not be returned to that teacher's classroom following readmission unless the teacher consents. If the expelled student's request for readmission is denied, the Chancellor's Designee will not consider a subsequent request for readmission of that student until six months after the submission of the previous request.

Threatening Acts Students are prohibited from directing toward any other person any language, sign or act which threatens force, violence, or disruption, including the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody or control of another person or persons, by force, threat of force, or violence, or by putting the victim in fear. This includes but is not limited to any behavior resulting in a felony conviction on a weapon, drug, assault, or other charge that compromises the safety of other persons. (The principal will determine the seriousness of the act.) Consequence Range: ISS – Expulsion. Severe violation of this policy may result in long-term suspension or expulsion.

Criminal Behavior

Criminal or other illegal behavior is prohibited. Any student the principal reasonably believes to have engaged in criminal behavior on the school premises or at school activities will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as stated in applicable Board policies and may be criminally prosecuted as well.

The principal must report immediately to law enforcement officers and the Director of the School of Teaching and Learning, the following criminal behavior that occurs on school grounds, regardless of age or grade of the perpetrator or victim: assault resulting in serious personal injury; sexual assault; sexual offense; rape; kidnapping; indecent liberties with a minor; assault involving the use of a weapon; possession of a firearm in violation of the law; possession of a weapon in violation of the law; possession of a controlled substance in violation of the law; assault on

school officials, employees and/or volunteers; accessing or possessing pornography; homicide, including murder, manslaughter and death by vehicle; robbery; or armed robbery.

School officials will cooperate fully with any criminal investigation and prosecution. Any criminal behavior that also violates school rules or policy will be investigated independently from the criminal investigation and appropriate disciplinary action from the school will be taken.

School administrators have the authority to conduct reasonable searches and seize materials in accordance with School Policy for the purpose of maintaining a safe, orderly environment and for upholding standards of conduct established by the Jackson County BOE, WCU, and TCS.

Code of Conduct

Please refer to the drop-down menu for General Policies & Handbook on the Catamount School Information page. The Student Code of Conduct and Behavior Policy is linked from this page.

Title IX Sexual Harassment

The Catamount School intends that all students and employees should be free of unlawful sexual harassment as a part of a safe, orderly, caring, and inviting working and learning environment. The board expressly prohibits sexual harassment in the educational and work environment.

Examples of sexually harassing conduct include, but are not limited to, deliberate, unwelcome touching of a sexual nature or that takes on sexual connotations; suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats; pressure for sexual activity; continued or repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances or propositions; continued or repeated verbal remarks of a sexual nature; sexually degrading words used toward an individual or to describe an individual; sexual assault or violence; the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; or use of personal or school electronic communications to convey sexually inappropriate words, pictures or images. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, digital 16 imagery, email, text messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogging, websites and social networking websites (i.e. Instagram, SnapChat or Facebook).

When a student believes that he or she has been sexually harassed by another student, employee, or nonemployee such as a visitor, he/she should bring the matter to the attention of the principal, or to a teacher or counselor who then shall immediately report it to the principal. The principal shall report the conduct to the Title IX Coordinator who will determine whether the conduct should be addressed through the Catamount School's Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy. If the Title IX Coordinator determines that the Title IX process is not appropriate, the principal or the principal's designee will investigate the matter and may impose disciplinary sanctions on the harassing student in accordance with disciplinary policies.

Please refer to the drop-down menu for General Policies & Handbook on the Catamount School Information page. The Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures Policy is linked from this page.

Legal References: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended: GS 115C-391.

THE CATAMOUNT SCHOOL

Title I Family Engagement Agreement

School Agreement	Parent Agreement	Student Agreement
The Catamount School will provide innovative classroom instruction in a supportive learning environment so that all students can grow as learners. Therefore, we will strive to: ❖ Work in partnership with parents to educate all students. This includes regular communication with parents regarding student progress, access to learning materials to use at home, volunteer opportunities, and parental involvement events. ❖ Provide classroom instruction that is challenging and engaging. ❖ Collaborate with other staff to target student needs. ❖ Create a safe and effective learning environment through the implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS). ❖ Participate in meetings to develop the Home/School Agreement.	As the parent of a student at the Catamount School, I understand that my child's education is very important. Therefore, I will support the school by: ❖ Making sure that my child completes assignments and attends school regularly. ❖ Participate in parental involvement activities and communicate with the school. ❖ Support the teachers, support staff, and administrators in their work with my child. ❖ Support the PBIS system, the by understanding the components of the system and encouraging my child to engage in school appropriately. ❖ Provide materials and resources that my child will need to be successful.	As a student at the Catamount School, I know that I am responsible for my own success at school. I must work hard to achieve my goals and grow as a learner. Therefore, I must strive to take responsibility for my education by following the PBIS expectations. I will demonstrate: PRIDE in myself and my school: ❖ Positivity I will work with others and problem solve. ❖ Respect I will Listen to others and respect their space and property. ❖ Integrity I will do my work to the best of my ability. ❖ Dedication I will persevere through challenges. ❖ Excellence I will be prepared to work hard and help others.