

WALNUT RIDGE PRESCHOOL

2025-2026

PARENT/GUARDIAN-STUDENT HANDBOOK



Mrs. Suzanne MacDougall
Principal
Vernon Township School District
973-764-2801

Dear Walnut Ridge Preschool Parents and Guardians:

The information included in this handbook will enable you to become familiar with Walnut Ridge Preschool. Please take time to review its contents completely and keep it handy for future reference throughout the school year.

At Walnut Ridge Preschool, we value parents/guardians as their child's first teacher. Partnering with you fosters the connection between school and home in a way that can make your child's first educational experience successful. We welcome your support and involvement in your child's education and invite you to participate in preschool special activities/programs and parent/guardian sessions throughout the school year. If you wish to visit your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher in advance to schedule a convenient time.

We look forward to partnering with you to provide a rich and rewarding learning experience for your child.

Sincerely,
Administration, Faculty and Staff
Walnut Ridge Preschool



Walnut Ridge Preschool Important Information

Phone Numbers:

Main Office... 973-764-2801

Nurse/Health Office... 973-764-6343

Transportation... 973-764-4344 (Board office)

School Hours: School Office Hours 8:30-4:30 pm daily

<u>Daily Schedule</u>	<u>2-Hour Delayed Opening Schedule</u>	<u>Early Dismissal Schedule</u>
9:25am-3:25pm	11:25am - 3:25pm	9:25am - 1:30pm

Vernon Township School District

2025-2026

School Year Calendar



July 25						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

August 25						
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31						

September 25						
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November 25						
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December 25						
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January 26						
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February 26						
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March 26						
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April 26						
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May 26						
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June 26						
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July 26						
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August 26						
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If more than 8 emergency closing days are used, days will be removed from Spring Recess, working backward starting with Friday, April 10, 2026. Individuals are cautioned to consider special travel insurance as appropriate regarding Spring Recess.

September (19 days)
2-3: Teacher In-Service
4: First Day of School
October (21 days)
2: Yom Kippur (closed)
13: Staff PD (closed for students)
November (16 days)
3-5: Early Dismissal
Parent/Teacher Conferences
6-7: NJEA Convention (closed)
26: Early Dismissal
27-28: Thanksgiving (closed)
December (17 days)
23: Early Dismissal
24-31: Winter Recess (closed)
January (19 days)
1-2: New Years Day (closed)
19: MLK Day (closed)
February (19 days)
16: Presidents' Day/
Washington's Birthday (closed)
March (21 days)
16: Staff PD (closed for students)
April (16 days)
3-10: Spring Recess (closed)
May (20 days)
25: Memorial Day (closed)
June (12 days)
16: Last day of school (no snow days)
19: Juneteenth celebrated on 6/19-
closed if school is still in session

BOE Approved 3.20.25

*If more than 10 emergency closing days are used, days will be removed from Spring Recess, working backward starting with Friday, April 10, 2026.

VERNON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

625 County Road 517, P.O. Box 99

Vernon, NJ 07462

973-764-2900

Mrs. Jennifer Pellet, President
Mr. Brian Fisher
Mr. Joseph Sweeney
Mr. Carl Contino
Mr. John Kraus

Mr. Raymond Zimmerman
Mrs. Stephanie Vecharello
Mr. Charles Cimaglia, Vice President
Ms. Carolyn Ross

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS

Mrs. Eveny de Mendez
Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Raymond Slamb
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

**The Vernon Board of Education meets in public session on the third Thursday of each month.
The public is cordially invited to attend.**

VERNON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WALNUT RIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Suzanne MacDougall, Principal
PO Box 190, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-2801 FAX 973-764-0066

CEDAR MOUNTAIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Kristin Gudenkauf, Principal
PO Box 420, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-2890 FAX 973-764-3294

ROLLING HILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dr. Pauline Anderson, Principal
PO Box 769, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-2784 FAX 973-764-3284

CHILD STUDY TEAM

Mr. Russell Fay, Director
Dr. Brian James, Supervisor
PO Box 99, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-2935 FAX 973-764-0078

LOUNSBERRY HOLLOW SCHOOL

Mr. Marc Citro, Principal
PO Box 219, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-8745 FAX 973-764-0101

GLEN MEADOW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mrs. Jackie VanOrden, Principal
Dr. Eric Kosek, Assistant Principal
PO Box 516, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-8981 FAX 973-764-3295

VERNON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs. Lindsay LeDuc, Principal
Mr. Nick Demsak, Assistant Principal
Mr. Stephen Down, Assistant Principal
P.O. Box 800, Vernon, NJ 07462
973-764-2960 FAX 973-764-2961

District Website: www.vtsd.com

Note that the district email may be utilized to ask questions, offer suggestions, concerns, etc. If a response is necessary, you will be contacted.

Important Information for Walnut Ridge Preschool (alphabetically)

ABSENCES and TARDINESS

Parents/guardians are requested to enter in the Genesis Parent Portal by 8:30 am to report their child's absence.

Whenever a child has been absent from school **for any reason, he/she is required to bring a written excuse from his/her parents/guardians explaining the reason for the absence. This note must be brought with the child upon return to school. A note explaining a pupil's absence for a non-communicable illness for a period of more than three school days must be accompanied by a physician's statement of the pupil's illness.** Children returning to school following a period of illness must report to the school nurse and are expected to resume a normal schedule, which includes physical education, outdoor recess, etc. Therefore, students should be well enough to participate in all activities and be adequately dressed for the weather conditions of that day. If a doctor does not believe that a student is ready to resume a full program and this is in writing, special arrangements will be made. **In alignment with the New Jersey Department of Education, the Vernon Township School District does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, with the exception of school imposed absences (suspensions), religious holidays, and Take Your Child to Work Day.**

New Jersey State law is very clear on school attendance. The laws of the state of New Jersey require regular attendance of all pupils enrolled in the public schools. The Vernon Township Board of Education believes that regular attendance in class, participation in class activities, and interaction between student and teacher are vital and integral parts of the learning process. Frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process. Students cannot benefit from classroom instruction if they are not present. Poor attendance limits accomplishments and reinforces a habit which will handicap the individual in future education. Therefore, the Vernon Township Board of Education requires attendance of all students each day school is in session. Please make every effort to see that your child attends class regularly unless he/she is ill.

Based on a 180 day school year, any student who misses 18 days or more per year – or about two days every month – is considered chronically absent. Children can only be successful when they attend school regularly. Research suggests that chronic absenteeism in the early years can have a significant impact on how successful a child is in school. During these early growth years, students learn basic social and academic skills necessary for future academic success. Absenteeism in the early years can be linked with long-term reading problems, lower test scores, poor attendance in future school years and weaker social-emotional skills. **Please do not hesitate to reach out to the school with any special circumstances. We will assist in any way we can. You may get a “check-in” call from Mrs. Polhemus if your child is out frequently.**

We would encourage you to instill the importance of being on time, even at this young age. It is a valuable habit that will serve your child well throughout life. If a child is tardy on a continual basis, you will be contacted in order to prevent further tardiness. Lateness is detrimental not only to the child who is late, but also to the teacher and all the other students in the class.

ACCEPTABLE USE OF COMPUTER NETWORKS/COMPUTERS AND USE OF THE INTERNET

The Vernon Township school district provides computer equipment, computer services, and Internet access to its pupils and staff for educational purposes only. The purpose of providing technology resources is to improve learning and teaching through research, teacher training, collaboration, dissemination and use of global communication resources.

Pupils are responsible for good behavior on computer networks/computers just as they are in a classroom or a school hallway. Policy No. 2361R, an approved board policy, pertains to Acceptable Use of Computer Network/Computers and use of the Internet.

The policy states that behaviors including, but not limited to the following are prohibited:

1. Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures
2. Using obscene language
3. Harassing, insulting, or attacking others
4. Damaging computers, computer systems or computer networks/computers
5. Violating copyright laws
6. Using another's password
7. Trespassing in another's folders, work or files
8. Intentionally wasting limited resources
9. Employing the network/computers for commercial purposes
10. Engaging in other activities that do not advance the educational purposes for which computer network/computers are provided.

Students who violate acceptable use of computer networks/computers and use of the Internet shall be subject to consequences for violations under school and district discipline guidelines.

ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBERS, AND EMERGENCY CONTACT CHANGES

If you should change your address or telephone numbers, please go into your Aptegy Account and Genesis to update the information and notify the school office immediately. Also, please ensure your child's emergency address and telephone numbers are always up-to-date and correct.

Please be aware that emergency contacts provided to the school are used for the school and/or school nurse to contact parents. Please note in Genesis if an emergency contact can pick your child up from school. **If someone other than the parent/guardian is going to pick up the child, a note must be sent in from the parent/guardian informing the teacher/main office.**

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (*District Policy 1140*)

The Vernon Township Board of Education is an equal opportunity employer and adheres to all aspects of affirmative action guidelines. **The affirmative action officer for the Vernon Township Public Schools is -----** (PO Box 99, Rt. 517, Vernon, NJ 07462; (973) 764-2900, Ext. 4367). A complete affirmative action/Comprehensive Equity Plan file, which includes our district's policies, plans, procedures, and compliance with all state and federal mandates in regard to affirmative action and the state's new Comprehensive Equity Plan for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019 is available in the school office.

Our school district achieves and maintains compliance with all applicable laws, codes, regulations, and guidelines governing equity in education including, but not limited to the following:

Federal Law	State Law
• Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 • Titles IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 • Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 • The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) of 1997 • Equal Pay Act of 1973	• Article I, Paragraph 5 of the New Jersey State Constitution • N.J.S.A. 18A:36-20, Equality in Educational Programs • N.J.S.A. 10:5 New Jersey Law Against Discrimination • New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) 6A:7 • N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1, History of the United States and New Jersey • N.J.S.A. 18A:36-20, Prohibition of Discrimination

If there are any problems or questions dealing with affirmative action, our school's affirmative action officer(s) must be informed immediately so that a meeting can be arranged for remediation of any situation or problems that may arise. No pupil will be denied access to any educational program or activity based on race, color, creed, religion, gender, or economic status. The following approved board policies pertain to affirmative action and are covered by statute:

Policies/Regulations	
1510 Rights of Persons with Handicaps or Disabilities	1520 Equal Educational and Employment Opportunities and Avoidance of Harassment by Reason of Gender
1523 Comprehensive Equity Plan	1530 Equal Employment Opportunities
1550 Affirmative Action Program for Employment and Contract Practices	2260 Affirmative Action Program for School and Classroom Practices
3362 Sexual Harassment – Professional Employees	4352 Sexual Harassment – Non-Certified Employees

5512 Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying and Harassment	5750 Equal Educational Opportunity – Pupils
5751 Sexual Harassment – Pupils	5755 Equity in Educational Program and Services

The District has developed a Comprehensive Equity Plan (CEP). Our main objective is to: Provide staff development to all interested parents and community members, certified and non-certified staff to inform, identify, and resolve problems in the following areas:

- Student achievement gap
- Bullying
- Sexual Harassment
- Prejudice, bias, and stereotyping
- Diverse learning styles

The district will create and administer an interest survey to ensure equitable opportunities for female and male students to participate in athletics at Vernon Township High School. Survey results will be used to analyze the current athletic offerings to create a match.

The New Jersey Comprehensive Equity Plan has been developed and submitted to the NJ Department of Education Office of Specialized Populations/Equity and the Sussex County Office of Education.

HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, and BULLYING

A full copy of Policy 5512, Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying can be found on the district's website, www.vtsd.com.

Pursuant to Policy 5512, the Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a pupil. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for pupils to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its pupils in a safe and disciplined environment. Since pupils learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus. Electronic communication means communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, or pager. Any act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or by any other distinguishing characteristic; and that a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property, or that has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils; and creates a hostile educational environment for a pupil by interfering with a

pupil's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil is considered to be harassment, intimidation or bullying.

The district prohibits active or passive support for acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Pupils are encouraged to support other pupils who: walk away from these acts when they see them, constructively attempt to stop them, and report these acts to the building principal or designee.

The Board expects pupils to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other pupils and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment consistent with the Code of Pupil Conduct.

Policy 5512 and the Code of Pupil Conduct shall apply to instances when a school employee is made aware of alleged harassment, intimidation, or bullying occurring off school grounds when the alleged harassment, intimidation, or bullying has substantially disrupted or interfered with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other pupils; and either, a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the alleged behavior will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property, or the alleged behavior has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils; or the alleged behavior creates a hostile educational environment for the pupil by interfering with a pupil's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil.

Pupils, parents, and visitors are encouraged to report alleged violations to the principal on the same day when the individual witnessed or received reliable information regarding any such incident. Pupils, parents, and visitors may report an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying anonymously. Formal action for violations of the Code of Pupil Conduct may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Board believes that standards for pupil behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the pupils, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), staff, and community members, producing an atmosphere that encourages pupils to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for school district and community property on the part of pupils, staff, and community members.

Pupils are expected to behave in a way that creates a supportive learning environment. The Board believes the best discipline is self-imposed, and it is the responsibility of staff to use instances of violations of the Code of Pupil Conduct as opportunities to help pupils learn to assume and accept responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with pupils shall apply best practices designed to prevent pupil conduct problems and foster pupils' abilities to grow in self-discipline.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for pupils who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences for a pupil who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be varied and graded according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the pupil, and the pupil's history of problem behaviors and performance, and must be consistent

with the district's code of pupil conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the problem, protect and provide support for the victim of the act, and take corrective action for documented systemic problems related to harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a very significant concern. Federal and State laws guarantee that schools are absolutely free of sexual harassment. The Vernon Township Board of Education explicitly forbids any conduct or expression that may be construed as the sexual harassment of a pupil, by another pupil or by an employee of the district (Policy 5751). Any student who feels that he/she has been sexually harassed, or any employee who hears or has independent cause to suspect that a pupil has been subjected to sexual harassment, shall promptly notify the building administrator, who shall immediately initiate an investigation of the matter and report the findings to the Superintendent.

AHERA MANAGEMENT PLAN

The **Vernon Township Board of Education** hereby notifies all parents/guardians, students, employees, and staff that the activities required by the **Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA)** 40 CFR Part 763.93 have been fulfilled. These requirements include a Three Year Re-inspection and Assessment of the asbestos containing materials located within the School District facilities. A copy of the updated AHERA Management Plan document is currently available for review at the Main Office of each school and at the office of the Facilities Supervisor during regular school hours, Monday through Friday.

The AHERA Coordinator for the Vernon Township School District is:

Joseph Van Kirk/Facilities Director

Business Phone Number: 973-764-4285

Business Address: 30 Sammis Road, Vernon, NJ 07462

ASSEMBLIES

We hold various assemblies and activities throughout the year to reinforce concepts taught. Depending on the theme or topic, you will be invited to attend these assemblies/activities. Ample notification will be given to you for planning purposes.

BEHAVIOR and CONDUCT (district overview)

All students are both members of the educational community and the local community. Conduct in the areas of **good manners, politeness, and courtesy** should be in line with that which is expected in the home. If an infraction does occur and disciplinary action is necessary, the school's intent is educational, not punitive. Methods of discipline generally relate directly to the misbehavior. The goal of our discipline is to encourage children to determine right from wrong and grow into self-disciplined young people. It is in this spirit that we hope parents/guardians will assist in helping our young people develop their own self-discipline. The Vernon Township Board of Education has a zero tolerance position regarding any and

all forms of fighting, violent assaults, and any other physical confrontations. Students involved in any of these acts will face disciplinary measures including the possibility of having such actions reported to the police.

The school district will not permit any student to be in possession of any type of weapon (including toy weapons) or ammunition in school. Parents of any student found carrying such items will be contacted immediately.

DISTRICT EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT

The Vernon Township Public Schools recognize that rapid societal changes have impacted upon the traditional school and its approach to instruction and discipline. One constant factor in the midst of society's changes has been the district's goal of providing a pleasant, safe and challenging learning environment for every Vernon Township student. The home and school have a shared responsibility in achieving this goal.

Every school district has the right and responsibility to establish standards for acceptable student behavior within the school setting, and every student has the potential for choosing appropriate behavior and for becoming a responsible citizen of his/her school community regardless of background or current level of ability. To assist students and parents/guardians, we list below this district's behavioral expectations for all students in grades K-12.

We expect:

- ☐ that students will demonstrate an attitude of respect, courtesy, and kindness toward all;
- ☐ that students will refrain from using inappropriate, vulgar, and abusive language;
- ☐ that students will refrain from bullying, intimidating, threatening or harassing others;
- ☐ that students will avoid the possession, use, and abuse of dangerous and/or illegal substances;
- ☐ that students will resolve conflicts without the use of weapons, violence, and/or physical means;
- ☐ that students will come to school in clothing that is neither offensive, disruptive nor distracting within the school setting;
- ☐ that students will assist in maintaining a clean and beautiful school environment, free of litter, graffiti, and vandalism.

Since we expect each student to behave appropriately and to be a responsible and productive citizen of our school community, age appropriate consequences will be applied at each school for those students who are uncooperative and/or non-compliant. Please click here for the full District Code of [Policy 5600](#) and [Regulation 5600](#).

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES for Preschool

Walnut Ridge Preschool will be using the [Pyramid Model](#) to foster developmentally appropriate social-emotional development and to address [challenging behavior](#) that may arise as children are learning how to interact with peers and

adults. At this level, educators will work collaboratively with parents to develop consistent strategies that will improve students' self regulation and social-emotional skills.

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is in the best interest of the school and its mission. Students shall not be permitted to interfere or prevent others from their right and privilege to an education. Therefore, behavior which disrupts class work, creates disorder, threatens the safety of others, or invades the rights of others shall be a basis for intervention. In general, teachers handle routine discipline problems within their classroom.

The following school discipline practices will be enforced at the Preschool level:

First Infraction	Teacher and student will conference to review the incident. Teachers may contact parents/guardians.
Second Infraction	Teacher and student will conference to review the incident. Teacher will contact the parent/guardian.
Third Infraction	Teacher and student will conference and the incident will be reported to the principal. Teacher will contact the parent/guardian. At this time, consultation with the Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist may be considered.
Fourth Infraction	Teacher and student will conference and the incident will be reported to the principal. Teacher will contact the parent/guardian. At this time, consultation with the Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist or Team will be made to develop a more formal strategy to address the behavior.

CAFETERIA-BREAKFAST/LUNCH

Students will eat breakfast and snack in their classroom. The eating area should be a neat, clean and pleasant environment at all times. This is an excellent opportunity for students to interact socially with peers and adults in the classroom. Healthy snacks and drinks are encouraged to be brought from home. **Kindly note, every classroom is ALLERGY AWARE and PEANUT FREE.** Specifically, this means:

- Please pack lunch and snack in separate bags--kindly label each with your child's name.
- To avoid accidental contact with allergens, lunch boxes will be kept in student backpacks.
- Peanut free/Allergy Aware snacks will be kept in a separate basket or area in the classroom. P
- Please see our Safe Snacks Guide [HERE](#).
- Students will eat lunch in the cafeteria; therefore student lunch does not need to be peanut free.
- Safety precautions are in place for all students with food allergies.

- Please contact your child's teacher if you have food allergy concerns and be sure to let your child's teacher and the school nurse know of any food allergies.

The cost of lunch (including milk) is \$3.50 but is subject to change. Please refer to our website for additional mealtime information and Maschio's Food Services, Inc. pricing. This year, Maschio's is using payschoolcentral.com for families to create an online payment account. Free/reduced pricing is available for eligible families. Eligibility forms can be found on the Genesis Parent Portal. Breakfast and lunch must be ordered beforehand using the google order form found on the Walnut Ridge [webpage](#). [Monthly menus](#) are found online and also reflected on the google order form. You may order daily or up to a month in advance. Please be mindful to order lunch at the change of the month. The new monthly order form is posted on the website approximately 24 hours before the new month begins.

If your child brings lunch from home, please be sure to label the lunch box/bag with your child's name. If your child forgets his/her lunch at home he/she will be permitted to charge a lunch for that day. **The cafeteria will also provide a lunch program on scheduled early dismissal and delayed opening days.**

CLASS PARTIES/CELEBRATIONS AND VISITORS

- **Visitor Management System:** We welcome class visitors to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions. We will continue to use the Raptor Visitor Management system for those parents, guardians, or other family members who are entering the building. All guests will be required to check in and show his or her driver's license upon entering the building. Every visitor will be issued a visitor's pass, will be requested to wear the pass in a visible place on clothing, and will be required to turn in the pass before leaving the building.
- **Celebrations/Birthdays:** **The preschool has adopted a no-food celebration policy** for years--and with great success. That being said, preschool loves to celebrate student birthdays and other occasions. Parents/guardians are welcome to come into the classroom to read a story, play a game, make a craft, and more. Parents can provide a non-food "goody" bag or other non-food treat if they so choose.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between school and home is essential to successful early childhood education and is highly valued at Walnut Ridge. Here are ways that you can expect Walnut Ridge to communicate with you throughout the school year:

- School-wide "blasts" that will come to your email or cell phone. Please be sure your information is accurate in Genesis.
 - Weekly "blasts" Friday afternoon with reminders of upcoming events and important information.
 - As needed "blasts" will occur for reminders or any other information that is important for all families to know.

- Monthly Principal Blog that will contain reminders about procedures and will include recaps/photos of school or classroom events.
- Teachers will communicate with you through Remind or Classroom Dojo, email, notes, and/or phone calls. Teachers will let you know how you can sign up for the class Remind or Classroom Dojo app.

CELLULAR PHONES/SMART WATCHES

Students are discouraged from bringing cellphones and wearing smart watches to school. The use of cellular devices in school is prohibited. However, students who bring cellphones to school must keep them turned off and in their backpack and students wearing smart watches are prohibited from communicating with them. Parents of any student who uses cell phones, smart watches, or any electronic device will be notified via phone call.

CURRICULUM

VTSD Preschool uses the Tools of the Mind curriculum. The central focus of Tools of the Mind (Tools) is the development of both cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation at the same time that academic skills are taught. VTSD's preschool program is in its 13th year using this curriculum.

Specials: All children will have an additional opportunity for one special each week. Each class will follow a weekly rotating schedule for art or physical education. Your child's teacher will share this information with you.

DRESSING FOR SCHOOL

The preschool does not have a prescribed dress code. However, the wearing of any clothing that interferes with or distracts from the educational process will be subject to principal approval and/or contact with parents. Safe and comfortable footwear, such as laced or velcro sneakers, are recommended for daily outdoor and gross motor and are best for participation in gym class. **Flip flops may not be worn to school.**

With the exception of Preschool Fun Day, which are days of athletic events for students, we strongly encourage students and parents/guardians to view the school as the students' workplace. A preschool child's work involves sensory and art experiences. We request your cooperation in providing appropriate apparel that is washable and can withstand your child's messy adventures.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL (ECAC):

The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is in place to ensure the success and development of the continued development of the preschool program. The ECAC will be comprised of various stakeholders from both the district and the community and will be coordinated by the Community Parent Involvement Specialist (CPIS), Mrs. Sherry Polhemus. The

ECAC will conduct yearly family needs/interests surveys that will serve as a way to assess the needs of the community. The ECAC will meet quarterly to analyze family needs and coordinate efforts to provide resources and support for the preschool program and families. The ECAC will facilitate and/or promote community engagement activities that are relevant to early childhood education and development and other family needs. The ECAC will maintain a webpage that is dedicated to community information and resources for parents/guardians. Please reach out to Sherry Polhemus at spolhemus@vtsd.com for more information.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA Policy 8335)

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school

not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information, you may call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call 1-800-437-0833 or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are part of the educational program in the school. If a field trip is scheduled, you will be notified by your child’s teacher as to the location and cost of the trip as well as permission to attend. Field trips may take place within the school setting or at a facility in another location.

LIVE ANIMALS (Policy 7490)

Live animals may **not** be brought to school without the permission of the building principal. This includes pets. Please refrain from bringing your pet with you during parent drop off or pick up. Please contact your child’s teacher for further information.

LOST AND FOUND

Items found are usually turned in to the office and are forwarded to the Lost & Found box in the main office. Please contact your child’s teacher if your child has lost something at school. In addition, labeling all of your child’s possessions (lunchboxes, book bags, coats, boots, etc.) has proven to be a successful method of returning items to their rightful owners!

MARKING PERIODS

<u>First Trimester Ends</u>	<u>Second Trimester Ends</u>
December 1, 2025	March 9, 2026
<u>Third Trimester Ends</u>	
June 16, 2026	

December/June Report Cards Available in Genesis
**marking period dates are subject to change based on adjustments to the school calendar*

NURSE/HEALTH OFFICE INFORMATION

FOR ALL STUDENTS

Please contact the school nurse, Ms. Kimberly Muller, regarding any health matter at 973-764-6343. Parents/Guardians are welcome to discuss their child's health needs with the nurse. Please call the health office to arrange an appointment.

Please note the following:

- Students who are not feeling well enough to learn should **NOT** be sent to school. Parents/Guardians will be notified if a child becomes ill at school. Students will be sent home if they have an elevated temperature, may be exposing others to infection, or feel so ill that they cannot participate in classroom activities. Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing transportation to pick up their sick child when necessary.
- **Students must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications** (such as Motrin or Tylenol). For illnesses, including vomiting or diarrhea, **students must be vomiting or diarrhea free for 24 hours** before returning to school. For communicable diseases, such as strep throat, scarlet fever, and/or conjunctivitis (pink eye), students must be on prescribed treatment regimen for at least 24 hours and must have a note from a physician allowing them to return to school. Please see [this chart](#) for guidelines.
- Students returning to school following a communicable illness must be seen by the school nurse before returning to class.
- **Medication will be given in school only when the pupil's attendance depends on the timely administration of such medication.** "Medication" as per this law means any prescription drug, prescribed and/or over-the counter medicine including, but not limited to, aspirin, cough drops and cough medicines. Requests for the administration of medication in school must be made in writing and signed by the physician.
- **STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TRANSPORT MEDICATIONS TO AND FROM SCHOOL. PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST DELIVER AND PICK UP ALL MEDICATIONS USED BY STUDENTS IN SCHOOL.**
- **PLEASE NOTE: All medication must be in its original prescription bottle.**
- **IMPORTANT:** Hand written notes cannot be accepted from parents/guardians to administer medication. Physician permission only, as explained above, is required by regulation.

- **If your child has allergies, please inform the health office of this in writing, especially if medication is needed.** If your child needs oral medication immediately for insect bite reactions (bees, wasps, etc.) you are strongly encouraged to bring that medication to the nurse's office labeled correctly and accompanied by a note from the physician.
- All students are expected to participate in the outdoor recreation periods and all physical exercise programs. If a student is well enough to attend school, then he/she is expected, if capable, to go outside with the other children.
- Students excused from physical education will not be permitted to participate in recess and vice versa. Repeated requests from parents/guardians for physical education excuses may require a doctor's note.
- Parents/guardians should be aware of the importance of obtaining a physical exam at least once during each of the student's developmental stages: early childhood (preschool through grade 3), pre-adolescence (grade 4 through grade 6), and adolescence (grade 7 through grade 12).
- During the course of the school year, your child will have a height and weight check, as well as a hearing/vision screening. If the results of the hearing/vision screening are not within the accepted normal range, parents/guardians will be notified. If your child appears to be having difficulty in these areas, please feel free to contact the nurse.
- New students from out-of-state need to be tested for tuberculosis by the Mantoux test in accordance with the law. Parents/Guardians will be notified if the test is positive so that there can be follow-up with further medical study.
- Statutes of the State of New Jersey require full immunization for all students in schools across the state. Parents/Guardians are urged to contact the school nurse should they have any questions regarding these requirements.
- **Requests for payment of medical bills shall not be presented to the Vernon Township Board of Education. The Board, as a public body, under the Statutes of the State of New Jersey, assumes no responsibility or liability for such claims for medical payments. Such payments are made only as a result of adjudication through the courts.**
- To help us in case of emergency, please be sure to complete the emergency cards distributed to your child at the beginning of the school year/or completed in Genesis. It is imperative that all information on your child's emergency card be kept current throughout the year.

HEAD LICE INFESTATION

Head lice infestation can occur at any age, and each year 6 to 23 million Americans report having contracted head lice. One of the most prevalent misconceptions about head lice is that it occurs only from unclean environments or because of poor

hygiene. Everyone is at risk and if it happens in your family, it is not something that should cause embarrassment. The most important thing is to treat the problem immediately and notify your child's school, in particular the school nurse, and everyone else with whom your child has come in close contact. Presently, the chances are better than ever before of bringing this nationwide public health problem under control. More cases of head lice infestation occur than all other communicable childhood diseases combined. The Vernon Township Public School Head Lice Procedure is as follows:

1. After a case of head lice is reported to the school nurse or detected by the school nurse, the student will be excluded from school until treated and free of live lice.
2. The student identified with head lice will not be allowed on the school bus until cleared by the school nurse.
3. The student must be seen by the school nurse prior to re-admission to school.
4. Siblings of the affected student within the district will be assessed by the school nurse. If you have any questions, please contact the school nurse, Ms. Muller, at 973-764-6343.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per school year. This year, conferences will be held on November 3, 4, and 5. These will be a mix of day time and/or evening, with options for both in-person or virtual meetings. Please note, these conference days are early dismissal days. Spring conferences are tentatively scheduled for the week of April 27, 2026. These will be held on regular school days and will have both daytime and/or evening with options for both in-person or virtual meetings.

PEST MANAGEMENT

This notice is being distributed to comply with the New Jersey School Integrated Pest Management Act. Vernon Township Board of Education has adopted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy and has implemented an IPM Plan to comply with this law. IPM is a holistic, preventive approach to managing pests that is explained further in the school's IPM Policy, which is available on request.

All schools in New Jersey are required to have an Integrated Pest Management Coordinator (IPM Coordinator) to oversee all activities related to IPM and pesticide use at the school.

The IPM Coordinator for Vernon Township Board of Education is:

Name of IPM Coordinator: Joseph Van Kirk

Business Phone number: 973-764-2900

Business Address: PO Box 99, 625 Route 517, Vernon, NJ 07462

Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) (when one is available), of each pesticide product that may be used on school property are available for review by a parent, guardian, staff member, or student attending the school. Also, the IPM Coordinator is available to parents, guardians, and staff members for information and to discuss comments about IPM activities and pesticide use at the school. A list of products used during the past 12 months is listed below.

As part of a school pest management plan Vernon Township Board of Education may use pesticides to control pests. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) register pesticides to determine that the use of a pesticide in accordance with instructions printed on the label does not pose an unreasonable risk to human health and the environment. Nevertheless, the EPA and the DEP cannot guarantee that registered pesticides do not pose any risk to human health, thus unnecessary exposure to pesticides should be avoided. The EPA has issued the statement that where possible, persons who are potentially sensitive, such as pregnant women, infants and children, should avoid unnecessary pesticide exposure.

PRODUCTS USED DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS:

- a. EcoExempt Jet Wasp and Hornet Killer
- b. Catchmaster Rodent & Insect Glue
- c. DuPont Advion Ant Gel
- d. EcoExempt D. Dust Insecticide
- e. Generation Mini Block - Rodenticide

PLAYGROUND

To ensure safety, children are not to bring footballs, baseballs, tennis balls, toys, etc., to bus stops or to school to be used on the playground. Equipment such as this is provided by Walnut Ridge Preschool. Keeping this equipment home will help avoid problems at bus stops and on buses. Preschool students will use the preschool playground located at the end of Walnut Ridge near the district central offices, and blacktop areas behind the school. Walnut Ridge is excited to announce that a new playground will be installed during early fall of 2025. Updates will be forthcoming.

PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL TEAM (PIRT) and Specialist (PIRS)

The role of the Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist (PIRS) is to provide support and coaching to teachers to provide effective strategies to address the learning, social/emotional, and behavioral needs of all preschool students in a general education preschool classroom. The Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) is a team of specialists that can include preschool teachers, special education teachers, child study team staff, speech/language pathologists, school principal, and other appropriate specialists. The PIRS consults with the PIRT to provide support and intervention so that all children can succeed within the general education classroom. Parents will be notified by their child's classroom teacher if their child is recommended to the PIRT and will be invited to participate in PIRT meetings.

Screening: As part of the preschool program, all new students are screened by teachers or the PIRS using the Early Screening Inventory-3 (ESI-3) sometime during the first six weeks of school. The ESI-3 assesses a child's development in the areas of Visual Motor/Adaptive, Language and Cognition, and Gross Motor Skills with the purpose of allowing for targeted intervention, strategies, or support if needed. For families with older children, this screening tool is similar to the screening tool administered to all students entering kindergarten. Results will be shared with all parents/guardians via letter with a follow up phone call or conference as appropriate.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Any person or group having a legitimate interest in the schools of this district may present a request, suggestion, or complaint concerning district personnel, the educational program instructional or resource materials, or the operations of the district. The Board directs the establishment of procedures for the hearing and settlement of requests and complaints that provide a means for resolving them fairly and impartially, permit appropriate redress, and protect district personnel from unnecessary harassment.

Any misunderstandings or disputes between the public and school district staff should, whenever possible, be settled by direct, informal discussions among the interested parties. It is only when such informal meetings fail to resolve differences that more formal procedures shall be employed. A complaint about a school program or personnel should be addressed to the Building Principal.

The Superintendent shall establish procedures for the hearing of requests and complaints. Any complaint or grievance alleging discrimination on the basis of disability, sex, or age may, but need not, follow the steps and levels described in [Policy 9130](#) and [Regulation 9130](#). Complainants or grievants alleging discrimination in such areas may file a formal complaint with the appropriate State or Federal agency at any stage of the complaint/grievance process.

RIGHT TO KNOW

A complete “Right to Know” file is maintained in the main office of our school in compliance with NJ state law which states that any chemical substances utilized by school personnel will be labeled appropriately, including materials ordered and purchased from various companies that supply our school.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (SCA)

The School and Community Association (SCA) has a dual purpose. It is an avenue of communication between home and school, and it is also a means by which parents/guardians can help the school serve the children. This organization promotes both of these goals. **Beginning this year, Walnut Ridge School will have it's own Walnut Ridge SCA.** This SCA will include all preschool students and families in all preschool locations in the VTSD preschool program. General meetings, held monthly on the second Wednesday evening at 5:30pm, will provide an opportunity for parents/guardians of Walnut Ridge School to come together with teachers, administrators, and staff to develop activities and organize programs, which supplement and enhance the preschool program community. Please review your calendar and plan to attend their monthly meetings. Please see weekly blasts and the principal's blog for further information.

Please note, while fundraising is an important function of the SCA, parents/guardians and students are hereby notified that **door-to-door sales without an adult are clearly prohibited and not sanctioned by the Vernon Township Board of Education (Policy No. 5830).**

SCHOOL CLOSING, DELAYED OPENING AND EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS

School closings due to inclement weather or emergencies will be communicated as follows:

- **WEBSITE** – www.vtsd.com
- **Apptegy** - Parents/Guardians that have signed up for Apptegy through the Parent Portal will be notified via text, e-mail and/or phone call regarding any weather emergency.
- Parents/Guardians sign up online in the to receive notifications from your child's school to your phone, email or page. Information on how to sign up can be found in the Genese Portal as part of the annual forms.

NOTE: If you do not update your preferences online, notifications will only be sent to the home phone number on file.

TRANSPORTATION –Parents are reminded that in the event that hazardous road conditions or any other emergency exists, it may be necessary to dismiss students in the PM from the bus at alternate dismissal points leading into various developments. When such road conditions exist, every effort will be made to notify parents of alternate drop off locations. In addition, if you are not going to be home, it is **necessary** that you have alternative arrangements made for your child's care (a neighbor, a grandparent, etc.).

SCHOOL SAFETY

Vernon Township School District has prevention, intervention, and postvention plans to deal with issues of school safety at all schools. These plans have been developed in coordination with local, county, and state officials. In all cases, the safety of the students is paramount. Periodically throughout the year, drills will be held at each location to simulate a building evacuation and lockdown(s).

In the event of a real emergency, parents/guardians will be notified via the emergency calling system and local radio stations. Parents/Guardians should refrain from coming to the school during a declared emergency, as there will be no access to the school. The presence of non-emergency personnel could hinder the efforts of the first responders at the scene of the emergency. In addition, students will not be released to parents until law enforcement officials clear the scene for danger.

Parents/Guardians need to discuss and emphasize with their children the importance of reporting suspicious conversations, actions, or Internet activities that may indicate a potential for violence or to disrupt a school building. It is necessary in these situations to notify the building administrator or contact the Anonymous Tip Line at 973-764-8151.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ALCOHOL/DRUGS/WEAPONS

Unless prescribed by a physician, students enrolled in the Vernon Township Public Schools are forbidden from using, processing, selling, transferring, or being under the influence of drugs, narcotics or alcohol while at school, at a school function, on school property, on any transportation vehicle provided by the board, or otherwise under the jurisdiction of the school.

Education and instruction about the nature of alcohol/drugs/substance use and abuse is provided according to the board approved health curriculum. Other resources such as a guidance counselor, school nurse, child study team, and student assistance counselor are also available as appropriate to the situation.

Weapons of any type, regardless of intent, are not permitted on school property or at school endorsed functions. Where there exists reasonable suspicion to believe a student is in violation of this policy, the principal or his/her designee and the school nurse will be informed. Under all circumstances, Board of Education policy provides the framework within which school officials shall function.

NEW JERSEY STATUTES ANNOTATED TITLE 18A:40-4.0

Whenever it shall appear to any teaching staff member, school nurse or other educational personnel of any public school in this State that a pupil may be under the influence of a controlled dangerous substance as defined in P.L. 1970, chapter 226, section 2 (C. 24:21-2) or any chemical or chemical compound which releases vapor or fumes causing a condition of intoxication, inebriation, excitement, stupefaction, or dulling of the brain or nervous system including but not limited to glue containing a solvent having the property of releasing toxic vapors or fumes, as defined in P.L. 1965, chapter 41, section 1 (C. 2A:170-25.9) taken for purposes other than the treatment of sickness or injury as prescribed or administered by a person duly authorized by law to treat the sick and injured human beings, such teaching staff member, school nurse or other educational personnel shall report the matter as soon as possible to the school nurse or medical inspector, as the case may be and to the principal or, in his absence, to his designee. The principal or his designee, shall immediately notify the parent or guardian and the superintendent of schools, if there be one, or the administrative principal and arrange for an immediate examination of the pupil by a doctor selected by the parent or guardian, or if such doctor is not immediately available by the medical inspector, if he is available. If such doctor or medical inspector is not immediately available, the pupil shall be taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital for examination accompanied by a member of the school staff designated by the principal and a parent or guardian of the pupil if available. The pupil shall be examined as soon as possible for the purpose of diagnosing whether or not the pupil is under such influence. A written report of said examination shall be furnished within 24 hours by the examining physician to the parent or guardian of the pupil and to the superintendent of schools or administrative principal. If such diagnosis is positive, the pupil shall be returned to his home as soon as possible and appropriate data shall be furnished to the Department of Health pursuant to the "Controlled Dangerous Substances Registry Act of 1970", P.L. 1970, chapter 227 (C.26:2G-17, et seq.). The pupil shall not resume attendance at school until he submits to the principal a written report certifying that he is physically and mentally able to return thereto, which report shall be prepared by his personal physician, the medical inspector or the physician who examined him pursuant to the provisions of this act. No legal action can be taken against anyone involved in enforcing 18A:40-4.1. (18A:40-4.2)

Any person under the legal age to purchase alcoholic beverages who possesses or consumes any alcoholic beverages in any school is guilty of a disorderly person offense, and shall be fined not less than \$100. Whenever this offense is committed in a motor vehicle, the defendant will lose his driving privileges for 30 days. (2C:33-15)

Students suspended for drugs/alcohol will be denied participation in all school-related activities for the remainder of the marking period but not less than one month (20 days).

Under the laws of the State of New Jersey, an adult who knowingly serves, provides, or approves of the consumption of alcoholic beverages to a minor in his home can be liable for any injury or damage the minor may cause due to his intoxicated state. The law is not concerned with whether the adult approves or disapproves of the misuse of alcohol. An adult can be held legally responsible for the conduct of any juvenile that he allows to drink in his home. This includes situations where the juvenile inflicts or causes damage after he has left the adult's house.

*****PRESCHOOL STUDENTS:** If a student comes to school with an item that could be potentially hazardous (e.g. vape), the Walnut Ridge Health Office and administration will follow safety protocol procedures to ensure child health and safety. A parent/guardian will be notified immediately and will be required to take their child for drug testing at no cost to the parent.

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Preschool teachers and staff communicate with kindergarten teachers throughout the year to ensure students are ready for kindergarten. Although the Tools of the Mind preschool curriculum is in alignment with the kindergarten, teachers meet throughout the year to ensure students are prepared for the transition to kindergarten. In the spring, parents/guardians will be invited to attend sessions to learn more about ways students can practice getting ready for kindergarten at home and other transition events.

TRANSPORTATION

SCHOOL BUSES AND BUS STOPS ([District Policy 8600](#)), ([District Policy 8630](#))

Some preschool students will utilize district provided transportation and take a school bus to Walnut Ridge. While riding the school bus, your child is governed by State Law. Therefore, disruptive behavior, insubordination, foul language, and other inappropriate behaviors are **strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action**. The bus driver has complete charge of the bus, and students are required to obey directions given by the driver. **Parents/Guardians are never permitted to board buses.**

For preschool students, buses will circle back to the bus stop one time if no one is at the bus stop for their child. After that one time, students will be brought back to Walnut Ridge if no one is at the bus stop for their child. Parents need to develop a backup plan with a neighbor, friend, etc. in the event that they are not at the bus stop. Please call the bus company or alert the bus driver if someone other than a parent/guardian, or usual bus stop guardian will be at the bus stop for your child. Parents are to contact their child's school in an emergency and the child will be held in the main office.

Appropriate Bus Behavior: It is the school bus driver's responsibility to devote full attention to driving the school bus while the bus is in motion. Children's misbehavior on the school bus constitutes an extreme hazard because it can divert the driver's attention from the primary responsibility of conditions and possible hazards on the road as well as tending to the actual responsibilities of driving. Therefore, security cameras have been installed on the majority of our school buses for the purpose of monitoring student misbehavior.

The following bus discipline practices will be followed in the primary schools.

- Upon receipt of the first bus discipline report filed by the driver, the student is informed of the problem and will be given an opportunity to address the problem as a matter of his or her responsibility as developmentally appropriate; parents/guardians will be notified of the report.
- Should there be a second bus discipline report, the first and second reports are reviewed and parents/guardians will be notified by the guidance or the principal's office.
- Usually, on the third report, the student's privilege of riding the bus is removed temporarily and the parent/guardian must transport the student to and from school daily. Subsequent bus reports may result in additional bus suspensions.

Important to note: The building principal has the prerogative to enforce a bus suspension at any level depending on the severity of the infraction.

Bus Stop Safety: While waiting for school buses, all students are to remain in the bus shelter, where available, or off public roads. Parents/Guardians are asked to observe the behavior at the bus stops as a possible means of preventing accidents. The very presence of an adult often acts as a deterrent and might keep a child from throwing something or running into the road. Inappropriate behavior may result in disciplinary action. Students at the primary school level are not permitted to bring athletic equipment, radios, music players, video games, animals, glass containers, toys, etc. on the bus. Gum chewing is not permitted.

It is important to note: According to the Board of Education policy, students are not permitted to change buses for social reasons. In scheduling transportation for students who are attending child-care centers before and after regular school, all requests must be made for five days per week both to and from school. Emergency situations concerning bus changes are taken care of by the Transportation Department at the Board of Education office on Rt. 517. The telephone number is 973-764-2900, option #2, then option #1.

Bus Contact: It is important that all parents/guardians know their child's bus route number and the contractor who owns the bus. This information is displayed on the exterior of the school bus. Bus route numbers are also given on the bus pass, which is sent to every student before the first day of school. In the case of car/van routes, the information can be requested from the driver.

Should your child be late in arriving home or not get off at the appropriate bus stop, you should immediately contact the following:

- First: Call the school (Walnut Ridge 973-764-2801). If no one is available, call...
- Second: Transportation at the Board of Education Office at 973-764-4344 or 973-764-8025
If no one is available there, call...
- Third: the Vernon Township Police Dept. at 973-764-6155. The police will contact a school district official.

Bus Contractor Telephone Numbers:

Baldwin Transportation	973-764-4066
Decker Transportation	973-764-8005
First Student Lafayette	973-579-5272

SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT CLAIMS

In case of a school bus accident, the following steps must be followed for a parent/guardian to receive payment for any medical bills:

1. The parent/guardian is to submit the medical bills to their personal auto insurance carrier and/or their individual/group hospitalization carrier.
2. If any amount still remains, the parent/guardian must submit those bills to any other collectible insurance, which may include a student accident policy.
3. If any amount still remains, the parent/guardian could present the school bus contractor with the bills.

DRIVING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

NEVER DROP CHILDREN OFF TO ENTER THE BUILDING ALONE. Children who are brought to school by car are to be accompanied by an adult to the entrance door at the parent pickup entrance of the building at the All Purpose room. Children arriving late (after 9:35AM) **MUST** be accompanied by an adult and report to the main office. For the 9:25 a.m. drop-off time you must bring your child to the building/all purpose room doors. Someone will greet you at the door and take your child to his/her teacher with the rest of the students coming off the buses and entering the building at that time. In following this procedure this will enable more adequate visitor parking for other parents/guardians bringing their child to school.

PICKING UP YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

We encourage you NOT to pick up your child early unless absolutely necessary since classes are disrupted, students miss instruction, and added confusion may result. We understand that occasionally it may be necessary for you to arrange to

pick up your child for special “early release” from school. If such a family circumstance or emergency should occur, the steps below must be followed to ensure the safety and security of your child:

- If you are picking up your child from school, please visit **Genesis** and then follow the procedure below ***before noon on the day of the pick up*** or send a written, signed request in with your child. This note should be given to the classroom teacher, who, after being made aware of the circumstances, will send the note to the main office.
- If your child is picked up each day, there is no need to follow this procedure daily, as they will be listed on the Daily Pickup List.
- Students dropped off/picked up between 9:45am - 3:00pm, must use the main entrance doors. Students dropped off or picked up at regular arrival/dismissal times will use the All Purpose Room side door, labeled Parent Drop Off/Pick Up.
- Early pickups, especially between 3:00pm - 3:15pm, can shorten student learning time and disrupt the classroom’s end-of-day routine, which includes closing group, packing up, lining up, and transitioning to the all-purpose room. Please keep in mind that most classrooms have only one aide, and maintaining consistency is important for a smooth dismissal process. Unlike many schools, our preschool students are personally walked down to their parents at the end of the day, ensuring a safe and secure handoff. Your cooperation helps us provide the best experience for all children.
- In the event of a crisis or emergency, a phone call can be made to the main office. We understand that, on rare occasions, you will not be able to write a note in advance. Please note **we cannot hold a child in the office without a written note or parent call beyond bus departure time.**
- In all cases, the parent or guardian must come to the main office or other designated area of the school. We **will not** release a child to wait outside to be picked up.
- Under normal circumstances, your child will meet you either at the main office or another designated area. For student safety, **parents or guardians are NOT, under any circumstances, to go to the student’s classroom and take their child from class or from the playground.**
- We will not release your child to anyone other than a parent or guardian unless we have written authorization from you. If there is a special circumstance and a neighbor or relative appears to pick up your child, that release will only be made after we call you and verify the person’s identity. We cannot release children to siblings under 18 years of age, even with written parental permission.

- Anyone picking up a child will be required to **present proof of identification, specifically a valid driver's license**. They will be required to sign the child out, including date, time, child's name, reason, and their signature.
- Under no circumstances will a child be released if the child does not recognize the person who is there to pick him/her up.
- If a serious question by school office personnel arises regarding the above, it is possible that the building principal or his/her designee will immediately call the police for intervention and will hold the child until the police arrive.
- For both drop off and pickup, we ask that you do not park in the driveway. Please do not park in the "Handicap" or "Reserved" parking spaces. Please park in the main lot near the preschool playground.

VISITING THE SCHOOL

Parents/Guardians are always welcome at Walnut Ridge Preschool. To ensure the safety of our students and for security reasons, **ALL VISITORS MUST STOP AT THE OFFICE. All Visitors must present a valid driver's license to be scanned into our district Raptor System before proceeding to any classroom.** Parents/Guardians dropping off forgotten lunches, extra clothes, etc. may leave these items in the main office. We will ensure that they are brought promptly to your child's classroom.

WEBSITE CONSENT

Vernon Township Public Schools maintains a website at www.vtsd.com regarding district and school information. Anyone wishing to contact the district via e-mail may do so at district@vtsd.com. Frequently, we find it appropriate to recognize and honor our students' achievements, school events, and classroom activities on the Walnut Ridge monthly Principal's Blog. Each year, parents/guardians of all students will have an opportunity to revoke consent for their child to be photographed and included on the website. This can be found on the Genesis Portal as part of the mandatory forms that need to be completed each year.

It is a privilege to partner with you and your child to make this a successful and memorable school year.

