WHO WE ARE

WESTGATE ELEMENTARY MISSION AND VISION

Westgate Mission Statement:
Our mission is to ensure that all students achieve academic excellence and develop the character to make the world a better place.

To this end:
We will create a nurturing and safe learning community in which all participants are encouraged to take risks in order to reach their highest academic potential.

We will structure an academic environment in which all students achieve high standards and benchmarks while their progress is closely monitored, thus producing self-motivated learners.

In this way, we will impart the love of learning throughout our school community and pave the way towards a productive future for all.

Westgate Vision Statements:
The best way to achieve the vision of Westgate is for the staff to work together as a professional learning community. We envision a school where:

- Staff members value collaboration through ongoing grade-level and vertical team meetings;
- Staff members use assessment information to guide instruction;
- Staff members participate in professional development opportunities and continually strive to improve classroom instruction and student achievement;
- There is collective responsibility for student learning among staff, parents, and community;
- All members of the school community exhibit tolerance and respect for each other;
- Students take responsibility for their own actions and their own learning;
- Students are critical thinkers; and
- Students learn essential understandings, knowledge, and skills at each grade level.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
Westgate develops a yearly School Improvement Plan which is shared with parents and the community on the Westgate website.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

VIRGINIA STATE STANDARDS
The required instructional program for Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is defined in the Program of Studies (POS), which contains:
- Curriculum content and essential knowledge and skills for each grade level.
- Approved instructional resources.
- Assessment activities.
- Alignment with the Virginia Standards of Learning.
For more information: www.fcps.edu/is/pos/index.shtml

Our instructional program is also grounded in the Virginia Standards of Learning for all subject areas. The Standards of Learning adopted by the Virginia State Board of Education define the basic elementary program including Art, Health, Language Arts (Reading, Writing, and Oral Language), Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Science, and Social Studies. For more information: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/index.shtml

RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM
Westgate Elementary School Family and Student Handbook

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Our faculty and staff actively practice the Responsive Classroom philosophy. This approach to classroom life and learning emphasizes an environment that builds social and academic skills. The physical space in classrooms, morning meetings, and class and school rules are organized to facilitate opportunities for positive interaction.

Guiding Principles of the Responsive Classroom:
The Responsive Classroom approach is informed by the work of educational theorists and the experiences of exemplary classroom teachers. Seven principles guide this approach:

1. The social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
2. How children learn is as important as what they learn.
3. Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
4. To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills that include cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
5. Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach.
6. Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach.
7. How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Components of the Responsive Classroom Model:
These classroom practices are the heart of the Responsive Classroom approach:

- **Morning Meeting**—gathering as a whole class each morning to greet one another, share news, and warm up for the day ahead
- **Rule Creation**—helping students create classroom rules to ensure an environment that allows all class members to meet their learning goals
- **Interactive Modeling**—teaching children to notice and internalize expected behaviors through a unique modeling technique
- **Positive Teacher Language**—using words and tone as a tool to promote children's active learning, sense of community, and self-discipline
- **Logical Consequences**—responding to misbehavior in a way that allows children to fix and learn from their mistakes while preserving their dignity
- **Guided Discovery**—introducing classroom materials using a format that encourages independence, creativity, and responsibility
- **Academic Choice**—increasing student learning by allowing students teacher-structured choices in their work
- **Classroom Organization**—setting up the physical room in ways that encourage students' independence, cooperation, and productivity
- **Working with Families**—creating avenues for hearing parents' insights and helping them understand the school's teaching approaches
- **Collaborative Problem Solving**—using conferencing, role playing, and other strategies to resolve problems with students

The First Six Weeks of School
The first six weeks of school are an essential time to build classroom and school communities. Routines and expectations are set and emphasis is put on how the class will work together as a community. During this period, parents and visitors are discouraged from visiting classrooms as their presence can hinder this group development. After this initial period, visitors are welcome to come into classrooms.

For more information about Responsive Classroom, visit: [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org).
THE WESTGATE WAY
Common language that we use with the students aligns with our Westgate Way:
Respect Myself, Respect Others, Respect Property.

We teach our students to use a conflict resolution strategy:
1. Say, “STOP! I don’t like that.”
2. Walk Away.

READING AND WRITING WORKSHOP
We utilize the Reading and Writing Workshop methodology developed at Teachers College at Columbia University
as the core of our literacy instruction. Our instructional practices are also informed by other well-known reading
researchers like Fountas and Pinnell, Regie Routman, Stephanie Harvey, Carl Anderson, Kathy Collins. In Reading
Workshop, students are explicitly taught the strategies and habits of effective reading. They learn to talk, think, and
write well about their reading, and to live richly literate lives. In Writing Workshop, students learn to observe their
lives and the world around them, and to collect, draft, revise, and publish well-crafted narrative and expository texts.
For more information about this instructional approach, visit: www.readingandwritingproject.com.

The key components of Balanced Literacy at Westgate include:
- Independent Reading in Just Right Books
- Interactive Read Aloud
- Shared Reading
- Guided Reading
- Writing About Reading
- Writing Workshop
- Interactive Writing
- Shared Writing
- Word Study

READING LEVELS AND JUST RIGHT BOOKS
Students learn to read most effectively when they read books at their reading level. Our teachers use a variety of
assessments to understand each child’s individual reading level to maximize learning. Students are provided a variety
of books and reading materials at their Just Right level. For more information about reading levels and Just Right
books, please see your child’s teacher.

MATHEMATICS
Our mathematics curriculum follows the FCPS Program of Studies and VA Standards of Learning. Math instruction is
provided using a math workshop framework that incorporates the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Process
Standards. Components of our math instruction include calendar math, math happenings, guided math, math learning
stations, problem solving, reflection, and cognitively demanding tasks.

SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES
Science and Social Studies instruction is based on the POS Standards. Teachers are encouraged to design and deliver
authentic, project-based social studies and science instruction. Integrating technology and research is strongly
encouraged. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to use field trips and other extended learning opportunities to
enrich and extend Science and Social Studies learning.

TECHNOLOGY
Technology is a terrific tool for enhancing delivery of instruction and gathering, sharing, and presenting information.
We have laptops, desktops and iPads for students to access. SMART Boards, LCD projectors, digital cameras, video
cameras, document cameras, and other instructional technology tools are available for teacher use to enhance lessons.
Our School Based Technology Specialist is at Westgate half-time and her goals are to work with the teachers to
integrate technology into instruction and train them on new technology resources in order to provide students regular
access to technology.

LIBRARY
Westgate's library program is a driving force behind student growth in reading and creating a love of reading. Students have scheduled library visits weekly but can also check out books at other times. Our library is staffed full-time by our Library Media Specialist. Instructional materials including basal, supplemental or library materials may be challenged by any group or individual residing in Fairfax County. Procedures for challenging instructional materials are contained in Regulation 3009, which is available online.

STUDENT SUPPORT
Students sometimes experience challenges and need additional support beyond what the classroom teacher can provide. These difficulties may be academic, social, and/or emotional. When noted by school personnel, the process for addressing the difficulty may begin with a referral to Kid Watch, Response to Intervention Team, or to the school counselor. Often the issue is resolved during Kid Watch or at the school counseling level, but sometimes further assistance is necessary. When further information or resources are necessary, the child may be referred for special education services. If a child is found eligible to receive services, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is written and services are provided at school.

INCLUSION
We practice inclusion of all special needs students with the general education population. Students who receive English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or special education services spend the majority of the school day with their peers in the general education classroom setting. It is our philosophy that each child belongs to all of us; we are each responsible for every child's education.

ESOL students receive additional support if they are Non-English Proficient or Limited English Proficient. Occasionally students are taught the same content as their grade-level peers but in a small group setting outside of the classroom with the ESOL teacher. Special education students receive specialized individual or small group instruction outside of the general education population only if it is required in their IEP.

Westgate’s ESOL and special education teachers work in classrooms to support the needs of our ESOL and special education students. ESOL, special education, and classroom teachers regularly plan together to create lessons that are comprehensive and appropriate for all students. ESOL and special education teachers rotate through the classrooms on a regular basis.

SPECIAL EDUCATION
Special education services and instruction are combined with classroom instruction whenever possible, and most targeted instruction occurs in the general education setting. Students may be referred by an educational staff member or parent. Parents are involved in the referral, evaluation, and placement decision throughout the entire process. Each student receiving special education services will have an IEP developed and reviewed yearly with teachers and parents/guardians.

ENGLISH SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)
ESOL services are provided to students who need additional support in developing English language proficiency. Services provided by the ESOL teacher are an integrated part of classroom instruction. ESOL students learn academic content simultaneously as they acquire English. Any student who has been exposed to another language in the home will take a yearly assessment, called WIDA ACCESS for ELL's. This federally mandated assessment is given in late January/February.

FAMILY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM (FECEP/HEADSTART)
FECEP is a child development program for three and four-year-old children. The program involves parents and community professionals working with staff to provide comprehensive services to address the child's education, emotional, social, health, nutritional, and physical needs. Eligibility for FECEP is based on family income. The school office can provide enrollment information. For more information:
http://www.fcps.edu/is/earlychildhood/fecep/index.shtml
ADVANCED ACADEMIC PROGRAM (AAP)
Advanced Academic services are available for all students. Westgate is committed to providing challenging learning experiences for all learners that build on individual strengths and optimize academic potential. In order to meet the needs and develop the potential of advanced learners, FCPS and Westgate provide a continuum of advanced academic services. For more information: http://www.fcps.edu/is/aap/index.shtml

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
Band instruction is available to 5th and 6th grade students. String instruction is available to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
The elementary school counselors assist students, teachers, and parents in effectively meeting students’ academic, social, and emotional needs in the school setting. Westgate has a school counselor, social worker, and psychologist on staff.

ASSESSMENT
Assessment is used on an on-going basis to determine the mastery of content and the effectiveness of teaching. At least three times a year, all students are assessed using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. This assessment monitors each child’s individual progress in reading comprehension and fluency.

Additionally, we use a variety of tools to regularly measure student progress towards meeting standards. These include teacher-created benchmark assessments, as well as a variety of other classroom tools.

Students in grades 3-6 also participate in the FCPS eCART assessments. Given 2-4 times a year, these assessments align to the reading and math standards and skills presented on the SOL end-of-year assessments.

The Virginia SOL Assessment in Reading and Mathematics will be administered in May to third-sixth graders. Fourth graders will take a VA Studies SOL assessment in May and 5th graders will take a Science SOL.

HOWL TIME
HOWL Time is an all hands-on deck approach to providing personalized, targeted, small group instruction. All classes participate in HOWL time daily. Students are organized in small groups working together for six weeks on a specific topic.

HOMEWORK
Homework is designed to reinforce the day’s lessons either by practicing skills or using new skills in different contexts. Homework assignments are designed to be developmentally appropriate for each grade level.

Families need to encourage and monitor their child’s completion of homework. Children need a quiet, well-lit place to do homework and the family should have a nightly routine for where and when to do it. Families should check that homework is completed and offer assistance when needed, but should not complete their child’s homework. Families also can help students pack their backpack for school to make sure the homework gets to class each morning.

REPORTING TO PARENTS
The Elementary School Progress Report is sent home after each grading period (4 times a year). The purpose of the progress report is to share student progress with parents/guardians. Teachers will request conferences with parents at the end of the 1st grading period. Additional conferences are encouraged and may be requested by either the parent or the teacher.
http://www.fcps.edu/is/schoolcounseling/documents/ElementaryGradingandReportingHandbookparents.pdf
Policies and Procedures

Admissions and Enrollment
Westgate observes the enrollment guidelines set forth by Fairfax County Public Schools. Children entering the school in Kindergarten or First Grade must be five or six years old, respectively, by September 30th.

Attendance Policy
Our goal is to have a daily, on-time attendance rate of 100%. In order to meet the instructional needs of all of our students, it is critical to form good habits of punctual arrival and infrequent absences. School attendance is required for all students who reach five years of age on or before September 30th of the current school year.

The Commonwealth of Virginia mandatory school attendance laws will be strictly enforced. Parents will be held accountable for students who do not attend school regularly and on time. Please note: extended family vacations are not excused absences.

Tardiness
- All students who enter the building or classroom after 8:50 a.m. are tardy. All children arriving after 8:50 a.m. must be escorted to the main office with a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must sign the child in using the computer system. The reason for the tardy will be documented by the parent.
- Students will receive a Tardy Slip that they will give to their teacher as they enter the class so the tardy is noted on the Attendance Sheet. Children who arrive late and go to class without a Tardy Slip will be sent back to the main office.
- Children who eat breakfast at school should arrive at 8:30 a.m. so they will be in class by 8:40 a.m. If they arrive to their classrooms after 8:50 a.m., they will be counted as tardy.

Excused Absences
FCPS will excuse a student’s tardiness or absence due to:
- Illness of the student (a physician’s note may be required in case of chronic or long-term illness).
- Death in the family.
- Necessity of the student to attend legal proceedings.
- Observance of religious holidays.
- Other absences approved in advance by the principal upon written request of the parent.

Unexcused Absences
Absence or tardiness for the following reasons will be unexcused:
- Family trip.
- Child care problem.
- Oversleeping.
- Non-school-related activity.
- Traffic.
- Missed bus.

Absence Procedures
When a child is absent:
- Parents should notify the child’s teacher and school attendance line (703-610-5757) when absences can be anticipated.
- For unanticipated absences, the school should be notified on the day of the absences by 9:30 a.m. by calling 703-610-5757. When calling state the child’s name, teacher, and reason for the absence.
- Any student who has five unexcused absences will be referred to a school attendance officer for further action.
- If truancy continues, the school attendance officer will file a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.
For more information about attendance policies and procedures, please refer to the Parent and Student Guide for School Attendance in the Appendix of this Handbook.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AND PARTY INVITATIONS
To support our goal of teaching healthy habits, cupcakes, birthday cakes, and ice cream may not be brought in and passed out at school in celebration of student’s birthdays. If you want to send in a birthday treat for classmates, please send in a healthy snack for students to eat with their lunch (fruit snacks, pretzels, raisins, granola bars) or a small token (pencils, erasers) for each student. Party invitations to the entire class may be distributed during the school day. Invitations to select students must be delivered outside of school.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH
All Fairfax County Public Schools offer a hot lunch daily. Breakfast is served from 8:30 – 8:40 a.m. The full-price fee for school lunch is $3.00 per day and breakfast is $1.75. Each child should pay for his/her lunch at the beginning of each school day. In addition, all families may apply for free or reduced price lunches. Applications will be sent home during the month of August and are available in the main office. Families have three options to put money on student lunch accounts: cash, check (payable to Westgate ES) or online at www.myschoolbucks.com. Breakfast and lunch menus are available online at http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/serve/lunchmenus.shtml.

BULLYING
FCPS and Westgate are bound to ensure each child has a safe environment. Bullying in FCPS Students Rights and Responsibilities is defined as: “Any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. “Bullying” includes cyberbullying. “Bullying” does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.” Instances of bullying are taken seriously and addressed using the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SR&R) as well as Responsive Classroom strategies and structures. To report if your child has been bullied or a witness to these behaviors, contact our principal, Hallie Demetriades. More information: http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/ssaw/violenceprevention/bullyprevention.shtml

CALENDAR
The FCPS school calendar is available at https://www.fcps.edu/calendars/2017-2018-calendar and the Westgate calendar can be found on our website.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES
When space is available at times that do not interfere with Fairfax County Public Schools instructional programs, student activities, activities of school-related groups, FCPS Adult Education classes, and Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services, community members may reserve school facilities on a scheduled basis. Please refer to http://www.fcps.edu/fts/comuse/index.shtml and School Board Regulation 8420 - Leasing and Community Use of Facilities for additional information and scheduling.

DRESS CODE
All students are expected to dress appropriately for a K-12 educational environment. Any clothing that interferes with or disrupts the educational environment is unacceptable. Clothing with language or images that are vulgar, discriminatory or obscene; or clothing that promotes illegal or violent conduct, such as the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia; or clothing that contains threats such as gang symbols is prohibited. Clothing should fit, be neat and clean, and conform to standards of safety, good taste and decency. Clothing that exposes cleavage, private parts, the midriff, or undergarments; or that is otherwise sexually provocative, is prohibited. Examples of prohibited clothing includes, but are not limited to: sagging or low-cut pants, low-cut necklines that show cleavage, tube tops, halter tops, backless blouses or blouses with only ties in the back, clothing constructed of see-through material and head coverings unless required for religious or medical purposes.

Parents of students requiring accommodation for religious beliefs, disabilities, or other good causes should contact the principal. Students not complying with this code will be asked to cover the non-complying clothing, change clothes, or go home. Repeated infractions will result in disciplinary action. See Student Rights and Responsibilities (regulation 2601).

Students should wear footwear that enables them to fully participate in recess and PE classes.
EMERGENCIES
In the event Westgate closes early and/or is evacuated because of an emergency, school personnel or parent volunteers will notify parents. Throughout the year we conduct several fire, tornado and lockdown drills. We conduct these drills to prepare our students, faculty, and staff in the event of a real emergency situation. Therefore, you should be aware that your child may discuss the occurrence of these drills with you.

FIELD TRIPS
Field trips are scheduled throughout the year to provide Westgate students with learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom. Participating students are required to submit a completed field trip permission slip. These forms will be send home by your child’s teacher and provide specific information about the purpose of the trip, destination, date and time, mode of transportation (bus, car, Metro, walking), and the cost per student. Students will not be permitted to attend any field trip without a permission slip on file.

HEALTH ROOM
Westgate has the services of a heath room aide assigned by the Fairfax County Health Department. Health room services include vision and hearing screening as well as height and weight checks. Parents are notified in writing of any possible concern or deficiency discovered during the screening. Health screenings in no way take the place of regular physical checkups.

Although medication should be taken at home whenever possible, there are cases in which medication must be taken during school hours in order to meet student health needs. Students who require medication during the school day must comply with FCPS Regulation 2102, First Aid, Emergency Treatment, Health Plans, and Administration of Medication for Students. You must first contact the Westgate heath room aide to complete the necessary forms before bringing any medication to school. All prescription medication must be stored in the main office. Under no circumstances may any non-prescription medication including aspirin and cough drops be in the possession of children at school.

INCLEMENT WEATHER
In the event of a school closing due to inclement weather you can find updates on the FCPS website, www.fcps.edu, or on the local news stations. Parents will also receive an email directly from FCPS informing you of the delay or closing. If schools are open two hours late, school starts at 10:40 a.m. If schools close two hours early, students will be dismissed at 1:35 p.m.

LOST AND FOUND
All students’ articles should be clearly labeled with their name. Any articles found in and around the school will be placed in the lost and found area in the cafeteria. All items are donated at the end of the school year.

LUNCH FROM HOME
Students can bring lunch from home. Soft drinks and fast food are not allowed. If parents choose to bring fast food to school for their child, the child will eat in the main office. Students must bring a napkin, straw, fork, or spoon from home.

SAFETY AND SECURITY
Westgate is a closed campus. As such, all visitors to the school, including parents, must report to the main office and sign in and out using the Visitor Computer. All doors are locked at 8:30 a.m.

No child is allowed to leave the school unless accompanied by an identified parent or guardian. Every student leaving school early must be signed out in the main office.

There is no supervision before or after school. As such, students should not be left unattended prior to 8:30 a.m. and should be picked up by 3:35 p.m.

SCHOOL AGED CHILD CARE (SACC)
SACC is available for students attending Westgate. This is a Fairfax County Office of Children program which provides professional care for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Moderate monthly fees are based on family income. For more information: http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc/Sacc.htm.
SCHOOL HOURS
Our school hours are 8:40 a.m. to 3:35 p.m.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE
The teachers of Westgate are trained in the Responsive Classroom Model. We believe all children need opportunities to practice appropriate behaviors in order to become independent and responsible citizens. Children are expected to follow class and school rules, and when they do not, appropriate consequences will be put in place. Teachers use a variety of grade-appropriate consequences including time outs, loss of privileges, take a break, and logical consequences.

Fighting, sexual, physical, or verbal harassment, including bullying, is not tolerated and will result in administrative action.

Westgate operates under all FCPS discipline guidelines outlined in the Students' Rights and Responsibilities (SR&R) Regulation 2601, which is distributed to each child in September and available at www.fcps.edu.

STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL
Student Arrival and Dismissal
General
- The first bell rings at 8:40 a.m. and the tardy bell rings at 8:50 a.m. Supervision of students begins at 8:30 a.m. NO child should arrive at Westgate prior to 8:30 a.m. Students who arrive after 8:50 a.m. are considered tardy and must be accompanied into the office by a parent or guardian.
- Students are dismissed between 3:30 and 3:35 p.m. depending on how they go home in the afternoon.
- There is no parent parking in school parking lots during arrival and dismissal. We encourage you to walk, stay in your car and drop your child off at Kiss and Ride, or have your child ride the school bus (if available).
- The front loop is only for school buses, service delivery, emergency equipment, and visitor/parent parking. Only buses are allowed in the front loop from 8:10 – 8:55 a.m. and 3:15 – 3:45 p.m.
- For safety reasons, parking and walking students in or picking them up is strongly discouraged. The congestion this causes presents a safety hazard for students, staff, and vehicles.
- Bike Riders – Westgate students who are in a walking area are encouraged to ride their bikes to/from school. If you decide to allow your child to ride a bike, please review a safe bike route, ensure they wear a helmet, and know how to lock their bike on a bike rack. Our bike rack is located in the front of school. Westgate is not responsible for stolen bikes.
- Walkers – Westgate students who live in a walking area are encouraged to walk to/from school. If your child walks to/from school, review a safe walking route with your child.
- Bus Riders – Depending on where you live, a school bus will pick up/drop off your child. Review the bus stop and number with your child so they board the correct bus and get off the bus at the right stop. The bus stops will be available during Open House on August 25. Please report to the bus stop five minutes before the listed time.
- Kiss and Ride – Kiss and Ride is used when you are driving to Westgate and dropping off or picking up your child. The Kiss and Ride area is located in the back parking lot. You drive up and drop off/pick up your child. Parents using Kiss and Ride are asked to use a Kiss and Ride tag with a number that is assigned to your child. You can get a Kiss and Ride tag at Open House or in the main office. Kiss and Ride tags do not need to be used in the morning. If you forget your tag in the afternoon, you can still use Kiss and Ride, just tell the staff member your number or who you are picking up. All drivers must turn right onto Magarity Road when leaving the Kiss and Ride parking lot.

Arrival
- If students arrive between 8:30 – 8:40 a.m. they report to the gym (grades K-3) or cafeteria (grades 4-6). If your child arrives after 8:50 a.m., you must bring them to the office to sign in.
- On the first day of school, parents are welcome to walk their child to the classroom. Starting on the second day, only students will be allowed to enter the school building in the morning (this is for the safety and security of all students – when we have too many parents, children without parents are overwhelmed and can get lost in the crowds). We will make sure your child gets to the right classroom. After the second week of school, you are welcome to come into the building in the mornings.

Dismissal
Students are dismissed beginning at 3:30 p.m. Bus rider and walkers exit through the main doors and car riders in the cafeteria for Kiss and Ride. Students meeting their parents to walk home meet at the main doors.
TEXTBOOKS AND LIBRARY BOOKS
Most of the textbooks and reading books used during the school day are provided by the Fairfax County Public Schools. Textbooks are loaned to students for the school year. These books should be kept covered, clean, and in good condition. Students and families will be held responsible for replacing books that have been damaged or lost.

Similarly, library books are for the general school population and high circulation is encouraged. Lost or damaged books must be returned, replaced, or paid for before the school year ends. If they are not, students may not receive their final report card and school records may not be forwarded.

TOYS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Toys should be left at home unless the teacher has made a special request that children bring them to school. Children who do not follow this rule may have the toy taken away until the end of the school day. Toys include balls, bats, games, electronic toys, sports cards, game cards, cars, dolls, etc. If students bring cell phones to school they must remain off and secured in their backpack throughout the day, unless it is a registered devise through BYOD and the child has teacher permission.

To support instruction, students in grades 3-6 are permitted to bring a personally owned electronic and computing device to school (BYOD – Bring your own devise FCPS program). The use of student owned devices is restricted to instructional activities under the direct supervision of a staff member. Students using privately owned electronic devices must follow the policies stated in the SR&R while on school property, attending school-sponsored activities or using the FCPS network. More information on BYOD can be found on our web site. http://www.fcps.edu/it/byod/index.shtml

TUESDAY NEWS
Each week Westgate publishes news for all families and students. This is an informative tool for sharing upcoming events, news and announcements, updated policies and procedures, and showcasing student and staff successes. Tuesday News is sent via email every Tuesday. If you want a paper copy of information sent home in Tuesday News, please contact the main office.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNICATION
We believe effective communication is essential to building and maintaining a strong school community. Westgate’s Tuesday News is emailed to parents weekly and posted on the school website. Our website, www.fcps.edu/WestgateES/, is also a great way to learn about upcoming events and activities.

FCPS 24/7 LEARNING
FCPS 24/7 Learning is the online resource that allows Fairfax County Public Schools students to extend learning beyond the traditional school day and beyond school facilities. Students, parents, and teachers use FCPS 24-7 Learning to access homework and classroom assignments, view class calendars, explore links to enrichment activities, and much more.

MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
School administration is available to meet with parents and it is best to schedule an appointment in advance. When appointments are scheduled, the principal can give full attention to the parent. If the issue relates to the classroom, it is best to talk with the classroom teacher first. If the issue cannot be resolved with the teacher, then it should be brought to the principal’s attention. Parents may make appointments by calling the main office.

PARENT CONFERENCES
It is essential for parents and teachers to confer on a regular basis to discuss the progress of each student. At the end of the first quarter a parent/teacher conference is scheduled with each family.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION
Westgate has a very active Parent Teacher Association. The PTA meets on a monthly basis and plans a variety of programs and fundraisers for the school. As well, the PTA coordinates the Westgate After-School Program. Contact the main office for PTA contact information.
PARENT VISITS
Parents are always welcome to visit their child’s class and the school. However, it is expected parents will contact the teacher in advance to set up a mutually agreeable time. All school visitors are required to sign-in at the main office, show identification, and receive a visitor’s pass.

ROOM PARENTS
All classes have room parents who help communicate with families about upcoming field trips, events, or volunteer needs on behalf of the classroom.

STAFF EMAIL
All employees in Fairfax County Public Schools have an email account. This system offers teachers and principals a good way to communicate with parents. E-mail addresses for school staff are found on the school’s web site.

STUDENT DIRECTORY
Annually, the Westgate Elementary School PTA publishes a family directory including contact information for all Westgate Families. You have the right to choose whether your student’s directory information is released or not. If you want to limit the disclosure of directory information about your child, please complete the Objection to Release of Directory Information to the Public form and return to the main office.

VOLUNTEERS
Westgate welcomes volunteers. Volunteers can contribute to Westgate in a variety of ways including: reading, chaperoning, photocopying, helping in the classroom, organizing clean-up days, working in the library or health room, donating food for special events, etc.

There is a FCPS process for becoming a regular volunteer or mentor. More information is available at: https://www.fcps.edu/get-involved.
Westgate Parent and Student FAQs on Attendance

Regular school attendance is vital to academic success. When students are absent, they miss valuable information and lessons necessary to meet world-class standards. A student’s lack of attendance can affect academic, social, and emotional growth. Families, schools and communities must work as a team to support school attendance.

Is school attendance required?
Yes, the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Compulsory Attendance Law, Code of Virginia 22.1-258 requires that all children between the ages of five and eighteen be enrolled in school. Students must attend school on a daily basis.

What is the role of the parent?
Parents are held accountable for students who do not attend school regularly and on time. Code of Virginia, 22.1-262, requires that the parent or guardian comply with the law and participate in the development of the plan to resolve a student’s non-attendance.

What types of absences may be excused?
FCPS will excuse a student’s tardiness or absence due to:
- Illness of the student (a physician’s note may be required in case of chronic or long-term illness).
- Death in the family.
- Necessity of the student to attend legal proceedings.
- Observance of religious holidays.
- Other absences approved in advance by the principal upon written request of the parent.

Please note: extended family vacations are not excused absences.

What types of absences may not be excused?
Absence or tardiness for the following reasons will be unexcused:
- Family trip.
- Child care problem.
- Oversleeping.
- Non-school-related activity.
- Traffic.
- Missed Bus.

What are the procedures when my child is absent?
- Parents should notify the child’s teacher and school attendance line (703-610-5757) when absences can be anticipated.
- For unanticipated absences, the school should be notified on the day of the absences by 9:30 a.m. by calling 703-610-5757. When calling state the child’s name, teacher, and specific information regarding the reason for the absence. If the child is ill, and has seen a physician, be specific about your child’s condition (strep throat, pink eye, etc). If the child is ill, but has not seen a physician, be specific about your child’s symptoms (fever, cough, headache, vomiting, etc).

What happens if my child has 5 or more unexcused absences?
Any student who has five unexcused absences will be referred to a school attendance officer for further action.
What happens if my child has 10 or more excused absences, late arrivals, or early departures?
Any student who has 10 or more excused absences, late arrivals, or early departures will be referred to a school attendance officer for further action and will be required to provide documentation for absence.

Who is the attendance officer and what is their role?
The attendance officer is an FCPS employee who works with FCPS and the Fairfax County Court System. When the attendance officer receives a referral, the attendance officer will contact the family and interview the student and parent to develop a plan to resolve the attendance issue. If truancy continues, the school attendance officer will file a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.

What if my child is late to school or picked up early?
All students who enter the building or classroom after 8:50 a.m. are tardy. All children arriving after 8:50 a.m. must be escorted to the main office with a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must sign the child in using the computer system. The reason for the tardy will be documented by the parent.

Parents picking up students early will report to the main office and sign the student out using the computer system.

Tardies and early pick-ups are recorded in our student information system and tracked by school administration. School administration will contact parents and begin documentation after 5 tardies or early pick-ups. A referral to the school attendance officer will occur after the 10th occurrence.

What are the consequences of poor school attendance (absences, tardies, and early pick-ups)?
Poor school attendance may result in:

- Poor work habits
- Lower grades/loss of credit
- Frustration in learning
- Dropping out of school
- Lower self-esteem
- Lack of self-discipline
- Unsupervised activities
- Delinquency
- Reduced earning potential
- Future unemployment
- Potential criminal activity

What can parents do?
Parents can help improve student attendance in the following ways:

- Let your child know that school is important.
- Set a regular bedtime schedule. Age should not be a factor.
- Provide your child with plenty of time to get ready for school.
- Plan an alternate way for your child to get to school on time, just in case the usual method isn't available one day.
- Schedule medical, dental and other appointments before and after school hours whenever possible.
- Schedule family trips during scheduled school vacations.