

**GREAT FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**www.gfms.gmrzd.org**  
**Student Handbook Excerpts**  
**2019 - 2020**

*\*\* These handbook excerpts were published in May 2019 for inclusion in the 2019-2020 student planners.  
Please refer to the paper and online 2019-20 Student and Family Handbook published in August 2019  
for updates and complete school and district policies. \*\**

**Great Falls Middle School Mission Statement**

The mission of the Great Falls Middle School is to provide a safe, nurturing and academically challenging environment, thus empowering students to develop and recognize their value and place in the global community.

**Staff Contact Information**

To reach any middle school faculty or staff member or to schedule a conference, call the main office at 863-7300. Indicate your child's name/grade, and leave time/dates and a phone number and/or email address where you can be reached. Email addresses for all staff are provided on the school's webpage.

Ms. Joanne Menard, Principal  
Mr. Thomas Gaffigan, Assistant Principal  
Ms. Emily Krems, Guidance Counselor  
Mrs. Sandra Bailey & Ms. Melissa Rushford, Administrative Assistants

**GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Jane Oakes, Chair [jane.oakes@gmrzd.org](mailto:jane.oakes@gmrzd.org)  
Heather Katsoulis, Vice Chair [heather.katsoulis@gmrzd.org](mailto:heather.katsoulis@gmrzd.org)  
Michael Langknecht, Treasurer [mike.langknecht@gmrzd.org](mailto:mike.langknecht@gmrzd.org)  
Timmie Smith [timmi.smith@gmrzd.org](mailto:timmi.smith@gmrzd.org)  
Thomasina Hall [thomi.hall@gmrzd.org](mailto:thomi.hall@gmrzd.org)  
Haley Anderson [haley.anderson@gmrzd.org](mailto:haley.anderson@gmrzd.org)  
William Tomb [william.tomb@gmrzd.org](mailto:william.tomb@gmrzd.org)  
Cassie Damkoehler [cassie.damkoehler@gmrzd.org](mailto:cassie.damkoehler@gmrzd.org)  
Jennifer Lively Erving Representative [jennifer.lively@gmrzd.org](mailto:jennifer.lively@gmrzd.org)  
Theresa Kolodziej, Erving Representative [theresa.kolodziej@gmrzd.org](mailto:theresa.kolodziej@gmrzd.org)  
Student Representative - TBD

## **Abbreviations**

ASR – After School Responsibility  
IEP – Individualized Education Plan  
CPR – Circle of Power & Respect  
CRA- Child Requiring Assistance  
DD-Developmental Designs  
GMRSD – Gill-Montague Regional School District  
MIAA – Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association  
GFMS – Great Falls Middle School  
TFHS – Turners Falls High School  
RP – Restorative Practices  
RBR- Responsible Behavior Room  
ISS – Internal Suspension/In-school suspension  
OSS – External Suspension/Out-of-school suspension

## **School Hours**

Students may enter the building at 7:30am and must be in their CPRs (Circle of Power and Respect) by 7:45am for attendance to be taken. The school day ends at 2:25pm (11:00am on early dismissal days). If you need to reach a student during the school day please call the main office and we will get them a message immediately. **Once the school day ends, students must be in the main lobby or with an adult if they remain in the building for any reason.**

## **Student Identification Cards**

At the beginning of the school year, students will be issued an identification (ID) card and lanyard. ID cards increase record keeping efficiency, improve data collection, and help to ensure a safe educational environment for all our students. Students will need to use their ID cards when purchasing lunch, checking books out of the library, entering the building after the school day has begun, and for general identification purposes. Students and parents are reminded that ID cards are school property and are not to be purposely damaged. Should the ID card be lost or misplaced, the student must purchase a replacement at the main office for \$2. Students failing to abide by this policy may receive consequences that include lunch detentions and phone calls home.

## **Textbooks/Library Books/Chromebooks**

Students and their parents are responsible for all books and materials issued to them. If books or materials are lost, damaged, excessively soiled or worn beyond normal use, they must be paid for by the student. If a book or other item is lost, the teacher should be notified immediately. End of the year report cards may be delayed for any students who have not turned in or paid for materials or books that were issued to them. Students are responsible for any loss or damage to their 1:1 Chromebooks according to the terms of the GMRSD 1:1 Policy and Loan Agreement (see district website).

## **Parent and Student Plus Portals**

Parents may review their student's grades, attendance, homework assignments and receive messages and updates from teachers through the Plus Portal online system. Parents and student can check information at any time, from any computer using a private password that only the parent and the student know. When you visit the website for the first time you will be asked to "Create an Account" using the Access ID and Password you receive from the school. You can expect that teachers will post grades weekly and homework assignments daily or whenever assigned. Contact the class teacher if you have questions about the information in the portal. Contact the main office if you need assistance accessing the portal.

## **Illness Policy**

It is district policy that if your child has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, he/she is required to stay home from school until fever-free (24 hours without the use of fever lowering medications such as Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen). If your child develops diarrhea or vomiting, he or she will need to be home until free of such symptoms for 24 hours, and is able to retain food and fluids. Please report any significant medical conditions, or contagious illnesses such as influenza ("flu") or strep throat to the school nurse. Also, please make sure that the office has updated contact information including emergency contacts in case your child needs to be picked up from school promptly due to illness or injury.

### **Medications**

Students are not allowed to carry medications in school. The only exceptions are for those requiring Epipens, inhalers, or diabetes supplies, which may be self-carried if signed medication orders from a MD/PCP are on file in the school health office. Contact the school nurse at 863-7300 with questions or concerns.

### **Developmental Designs and Restorative Practices**

Developmental Designs is GFMS's comprehensive approach to educating adolescents that integrates social-emotional and academic learning to promote a safe, positive school environment for all. Practices include take a break, buddy room, quick conference, reflection sheets, Circles of Power and Respect, and the social contract. GFMS has also implemented Restorative Practices as a tool to build community, resolve conflict and repair harm that may have been done. Students and staff are given an opportunity to talk in supportive environment to discuss the specific situation and come up with logical solutions and consequences if needed. Parents are encouraged to contact an administrator for more information.

### **Great Falls Middle School Code of Conduct**

The Middle School code of conduct encourages accountability for one's behavior and is intended to assist students in recognizing and taking responsibility for the important decisions that must be made in learning to become independent and productive members of the school community.

1. Our school wide goal is to create a safe and positive learning environment.
2. Our school community collectively abides by a statement of beliefs created by the students known as the Social Contract.
3. All school staff members treat students with respect and maintain open communication with the home.

### **Student Responsibilities**

1. **Attend School Daily.** Every student needs to attend school daily and be on time. The school day begins at 7:45am and ends at 2:25pm. After an absence or tardy the student must provide a written note of explanation from a parent or guardian upon their return to school. It is the student's responsibility to check in with teachers about missed assignments and arrange to make up missed work.  
*\*\*Please see the Attendance Policy for more details.*
2. **Participate Fully in Class.** While in class you are expected to actively participate in learning activities. It is your responsibility to be prepared with the materials (planner, pencil, binder, etc.) required by the teacher.
3. **Know and follow the SOCIAL CONTRACT as well as....**
  - A. Be honest always.
  - B. Respect your peers, teachers, other school staff, and most importantly, yourself. Always demonstrate common courtesy to everyone in our school community. This includes respecting the rights and property of others, as well all school property. If you break, damage, or deface school property, you will either repair or pay for the damage.
  - C. **Appropriate Dress:** It is important to create a learning environment that is comfortable, safe, clean, and not disruptive to others. All students are to dress in a manner that does not violate established codes of respect, health and safety. Specifically:
    1. Wear clothing that fits properly and completely covers all undergarments. For example, low-cut shirts, low-hanging trousers, and baggy or spaghetti-strap tank tops should not be worn.
    2. Wear tops and bottoms that meet, even when your arms are raised (the midriff should be covered front and back.)
    3. Hats, hoods and other forms of headgear are not to be worn in the school building at any time (excluding those worn for religious reasons).
    4. Any clothing with offensive pictures/statements or that promote drugs/alcohol/tobacco will not be permitted.
    5. Do not wear fragrances -- we are a "scent-free" school. Many people are sensitive to body sprays/scented lotions/etc.
    6. If clothing worn by a student violates these guidelines, students will be offered the option to change or call home for a change of clothes, with no further consequence unless the situation is escalated by the student's refusal to change.

- D. Be punctual. You should be in your assigned area always; otherwise you must have a pass from your teacher. When dismissed from one class you are expected to go directly to the next class. Students who are late to class without a pass will be required to stay after school with that teacher. If classroom tardiness exceeds three times, the student will be referred to the Responsible Behavior Room for further consequences.
- E. Lockers are school property; on occasion, it may become necessary for designated school staff to open and examine the contents of a student's locker.
- F. Use appropriate language, without swears, always. Do not use any language that targets or demeans a person based on their identity; such language makes others feel unsafe and is unacceptable in our school.
- G. Demonstrate school appropriate behavior always. Be self-controlled, non-disruptive and reasonably quiet in classrooms, hallways, school buses, on school property, and at school-related activities.
- H. Students are encouraged not to bring any items of significant value to school, such as electronics and large amounts of money. Students are responsible for their own belongings; **the school will not be responsible for damaged, lost or stolen property.**

*\*\*Please see the Electronic Device policy for more details.\*\**

### Attendance Policies

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. School staff view it as one of our responsibilities to support families in ensuring that their child meet this important expectation. In addition to communicating with parents if attendance problems arise, school staff will work with families to create a plan for successful school attendance. This may include partnering with outside social service agencies.

Parents of children attending our schools have responsibilities as well to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and in accordance with state law. Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays. A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee. Family vacations should be scheduled during school vacations which are posted on the district website each July.

Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school unless it's unavoidable. **Students are expected to be in class 180 school days.** Massachusetts State Law requires an attendance rate of 93% or no more than seven absences in a six-month period. In instances of chronic or irregular absence due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified. Students may not participate in athletics or other after school activities on a day they are absent or arrive to school after 8:00 am. **Each day that students are absent, parents/guardians are expected to call the school (863-7300) prior to 8:30 AM and state the reason for the absence and estimated length of absence.**

### Parent Notification Practices

**An automated call will be made to parents/guardians on each day of a student's unexcused tardiness or absence from school.** When a student has missed five excused/unexcused cumulative days in a class, the school will notify parents/guardians via a letter. After seven excused/unexcused absences, the student and his/her parents/guardians will again be notified by letter and may be required to attend a meeting with school personnel to develop a plan for improving the student's attendance. Students with chronic attendance issues may be referred for to social service agencies for additional support in making a positive connection to school.

### Tardiness

Students are expected to be in their CPR, ready for attendance to be taken, at 7:45am. Any student who is late to school must check in at the office to get a tardy slip. All students who are late must provide a note from home explaining why they are tardy. Excused tardies are issued for emergencies, car trouble, and medical appointments. More than four unexcused tardies will result in disciplinary action starting with lunch detention. If the unexcused tardiness becomes a chronic pattern, a parent conference will be required to develop an intervention plan, which may include referral to a social service agency for additional support.

### **Academic Honesty, Progress Reports, and Report Cards**

Academic expectations are high in our school community and we expect that students show integrity in their school work. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will result in the student getting a zero on that assignment. Possible further consequences may include detention, suspension and/or parental meetings. The parents will be contacted by the school in such an event.

Halfway through the marking period progress reports will be posted in the Plus Portal to indicate areas where students need to improve. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns with that teacher or team. Students may also get progress reports in areas where they are doing exceptionally well. When a student is unable to complete the required work in a course due to an extended illness, or other reason acceptable to the teacher, an incomplete may be issued. Students with incompletes on their report cards must complete all work within two weeks of the end of the marking period to receive credit for that work. At the end of each quarter report cards are issued and mailed home. The report card includes teachers' comments about behavior and effort.

### **Grades and Honor Roll**

#### **Grades and Numeric Equivalents**

A =	4.0	C- =	1.7
A- =	3.7	D+ =	1.3
B+ =	3.3	D =	1.0
B =	3.0	D- =	0.7
B- =	2.7	F =	0.0
C+ =	2.3	I =	0.0
C =	2.0	Cut-Off W =	0.0

#### **Honor Roll Determination**

1. The honor roll shall be based on a simple Grade Point Average (G.P.A.)
2. A student who earns at least a 3.0 G.P.A., or B average, with no grade below a C, shall be eligible to be on the honor roll.
3. Students receiving an incomplete in any graded course will not be eligible for the honor roll.
4. Honor roll computation shall be based on grade point values noted above.
  - a. For purposes of the quarterly honor roll, all courses will have a weight of 1.0.
  - b. All grades except P (Pass) and W (Withdrawal) will be included in the computation.
  - c. The simple G.P.A. is arrived at by adding the numeric equivalents and dividing by the number of grades. The honor roll will be:

First Honors:	3.7 - 4.0
Second Honors:	3.4 - 3.699
Third Honors:	3.0 - 3.399

### **After School Responsibility Policy**

An After School Responsibility (ASR) is issued and served with the classroom teacher whenever an issue in the classroom arises. ASR's can be issued for the student to make up missed class time, misbehavior, to conference about concerns, etc. In such a case, the teacher and student will designate a date/time to conference and sign the ASR. A copy of the signed ASR goes to the student as a reminder.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify parents or guardians if they are assigned either a detention or an After School Responsibility. Should the student fail to report for the ASR or detention, the office will issue a lunch detention each day until it is served, and make a phone call home. Students are still responsible for serving the original ASR.

After school activities such as sports are not considered reasonable conflicts. After a conversation with the parent, any student who is unable to serve time after school may be assigned to an alternative consequence. A student may also be assigned to in-school suspension for repeatedly failing to report to detention or After School Responsibility.

Parent/guardian support for our policies regarding behavior is very important. Until the student fulfills his/her after school responsibilities and detentions, school-sponsored privileges will be suspended for this student. The student will not be permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities, including, but not limited to interscholastic sports, intramural sports, field trips, performances, and school dances.

### **Actions Leading to Suspension or Expulsion\***

The following breaches of conduct on school property, school transportation, or at any school-sponsored activity may lead to suspension or expulsion:

1. Willfully striking or assaulting a student or any member of the school staff, or inciting others to behave in this fashion. GFMS implements a strict “hands off” policy.
2. Theft of or damage to property.
3. The use of hateful, discriminatory, obscene or profane language, gestures, graphics or paraphernalia.
4. Deliberate refusal to follow a reasonable request made by a member of the school staff.
5. Threatening or intimidating school staff or students.
  6. Possession of anything that endangers the safety of others.
  7. Possession, selling or consumption of tobacco or e-cigarettes, narcotics, alcoholic beverages, or any controlled substance.
  8. Continual failure to attend classes after reporting to school.
  9. Any other serious violation of school rules or a series of violations that make the presence of the student a serious impediment to the operation of the school.
  10. Violation of GMRSD Acceptable Use Policy, local ordinances and/or state and federal statutes.

Suspension from school is a significant action, as it separates the student from the privilege and right to attend classes. Before this action is taken, a thorough investigation occurs to ascertain details in the case. When suspension is indicated, the student is removed from all classes and participation in school-related activities for the duration of the suspension period. A student may be assigned to serve a suspension in school (ISS) or at home (OSS). All suspensions affect eligibility for school dances, field trips, and other extracurricular activities, including school sports even after the suspension is served. In the event of an external suspension (OSS), a re-entry meeting is scheduled for the parent and student to meet with the administration to discuss the situation and plan for the student’s return to school.

*\*All decisions regarding suspensions whether internal (ISS) or external (OSS) are subject to the discretion of the Principal/designee.*

*\*Please see the full GFMS Handbook online at [gmsrd.org](http://gmsrd.org) for the complete discipline policies, including: appeal process for disciplinary action, internal and external suspension policies, discipline for students with IEP/504 plans,*

### **Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedure**

The Gill-Montague Regional School District is committed to maintaining and promoting an educational environment free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law, and the protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to the District. Discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, genetic information or testing, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability (hereinafter “membership in a protected class”) will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any student or other individual who has complained of discrimination, including harassment, or individuals who have cooperated with an investigation of such a complaint, is also unlawful and will not be tolerated. The District will promptly investigate, remedy any harm, seek to prevent recurrence of such conduct, and will also develop procedures to accomplish this end. This policy applies to conduct directed toward persons associated with the educational community by all other persons associated with the educational community including, but not limited to, students, District employees, the School Committee, school volunteers, and independent contractors.

#### **I. What Is Discrimination, including Harassment?**

A. Discrimination: Treating persons differently, or interfering with or preventing them from enjoying the advantages or privileges afforded to others because of their membership in a protected class.

### **General Laws Chapter 76, Section 5:**

Every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where he actually resides, subject to the following section. No school committee is required to enroll a person who does not actually reside in the town unless said enrollment is authorized by law or by the school committee. Any person who violates or assists in the violation of this provision may be required to remit full restitution to the town of the improperly-attended public schools. **No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.**

B. Harassment: Oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct relating to a person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit that person's ability to participate in the District's programs or activities by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment.

Harassing conduct based on a person's protected status may include, but is not limited to:

- Degrading, demeaning, insulting, or abusive verbal or written statements;
- Taking personal belongings, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors;
- Drawing or writing graffiti, slogans, visual displays, or symbols on school or another's property;
- Telling degrading or offensive jokes;
- Unwanted physical contact of any kind;
- Physical violence, threats of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or stalking;
- Threatening letter, emails, instant messages, or websites that come within the scope of the District's disciplinary authority;
- Defacing, damaging, or destroying school or another's property.

### **II. Responsibilities of all Persons Associated with Educational Community**

Each member of the educational community is personally responsible for ensuring that his/her conduct does not in any way harass or discriminate against any other person that he/she has contact with in the performance of his/her duties or studies or while acting as a member of the school community. In addition, each member of the educational community is required to fully cooperate in any investigation of alleged discrimination, including harassment. Further, District employees are obligated to intervene and stop any discrimination, including harassment they witness and to immediately report to the appropriate party instances of discrimination, including harassment that are reported to them or of which they otherwise learn.

### **III. Designated Officials for Addressing Discrimination and Harassment Complaints**

The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) are responsible for receiving reports and complaints of violations of this Policy. Individuals may file a report or complaint of discrimination, including harassment, with the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). If the complaint involves allegations of discrimination based on disability, the person filing the complainant also has the option to file his/her complaint with the building level 504 coordinator. A report or complaint of a violation involving the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should be filed with the Superintendent. A report or complaint of violation involving the Superintendent should be filed with the Committee.

The Civil Rights Coordinator:

Conor Driscoll, 48 Boyle Road, Gill, MA 01354, 413-863-3255, [conor.driscoll@gmrsl.org](mailto:conor.driscoll@gmrsl.org)

Title IX Coordinator:

Dianne Ellis, 222 Turnpike Road, Montague, MA 01351, 413-863-7200,

[dianne.ellis@gmrsl.org](mailto:dianne.ellis@gmrsl.org)

Section 504/Title II Coordinator:

Michael Sullivan, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls, MA 01376, 413-863-9324, [michael.sullivan@gmrsl.org](mailto:michael.sullivan@gmrsl.org)

## **V. Procedure for Reporting Discrimination and Harassment**

The following complaint procedure has been established to ensure prompt and effective investigation into allegations of discrimination, including harassment.

A person who believes that he or she had been discriminated against, including being harassed may, to the extent that they feel comfortable, immediately:

1. confront the harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against him/her;
2. state the conduct that he/she objects to;
3. indicate that he/she finds such conduct offensive, intimidating and/or embarrassing;
4. insist that the person(s) engaging in the conduct stop the conduct immediately; and/or
5. report the conduct immediately to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s).

If the individual with the concern is not comfortable with such a confrontation, or feels that such a confrontation is unsafe and/or otherwise inappropriate, he/she should instead report the situation to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). Reports/complaints are to be filed within ninety (90) days after the conduct complained of occurred or within the time the individual reasonably becomes aware of the conduct. (Note: this filing period may be extended for good cause.) The report can be written or oral and should consist of the following:

1. the specific conduct objected to,
2. the date(s) and time(s) such conduct took place,
3. the name(s) of the alleged harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against them,
4. the location(s) where the conduct occurred,
5. the name(s) of any witness(es),
6. action sought to remedy the situation, and
7. any other details or information requested by the designated official.

In addition, the person should provide the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) with any documentation (emails, notes, pictures, etc.) or other information in support of the allegation of discrimination, including harassment.

## **VI. Investigation of Complaints**

Upon receipt of a report or complaint, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should conduct a prompt investigation. The investigation must allow for the complainant, the subject of the complaint, the alleged harasser, and any other appropriate party to provide information, including witnesses or other evidence, relevant to the consideration and resolution of the complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will also endeavor to promptly interview and obtain detailed written statements from potential witnesses. If further documentation or information is necessary, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will notify the appropriate party, asking that the information be provided within ten (10) school/working days.

The District will take interim steps, as necessary, to ensure the safety and well-being of the complainant while the investigation is being conducted. Interim measures are available even if the complainant does not file or continue to pursue a complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) shall notify the complainant of specific types of interim measures available, which may include measures to avoid contact with the alleged harasser, allowing employees to change work situations as appropriate, or prohibiting an alleged harasser from having any contact with the complainant pending the results of the District's investigation. At any time, a complainant may request either orally or in writing to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) that specific interim measures be taken pending the outcome of the investigation.

A written determination regarding the complaint and any resolution will be provided by the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) to the complainant within thirty (30) school/working days of the complaint. The determination of whether the District's anti-discrimination policy has been violated will be based upon a preponderance of the evidence standard.



The complainant may request reconsideration of the determination and/or resolution of a complaint by notifying the Superintendent in writing or verbally within seven (7) school/working days of receipt of the written determination of the Civil Rights Coordinators. The Superintendent or his/her designee will respond to such request within (30) thirty school/working days of receipt of the request for reconsideration; his/her decision is final.

If a violation is found to have occurred, the District will take steps to prevent recurrence of the violation and correct its discriminatory effect on the person(s) affected. Such steps may include appropriate disciplinary action, counseling, development of a safety plan and other remedies, as appropriate.

#### **VII. Consequences of Violating Policy - Discipline & Discharge**

Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the contractual provisions governing his/her employment. In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which may range from detention, suspension from school, or expulsion from school. (Note: students with disabilities will be subject to the applicable disciplinary procedures set forth in the Students' Rights and Responsibilities District handbook, which adhere to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973.) In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

#### **VIII. Confidentiality**

Investigations of discrimination, including harassment complaints shall be conducted in such a manner as to disclose information only to those with a need to know or those who may have information pertinent to the investigation. Please note, some level of disclosure may be necessary in the course of conducting interviews in connection with investigation of any complaint under this policy. The District shall endeavor to keep such information as confidential as it can without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

#### **IX. State and Federal Authorities**

In addition to the process described above, the complainant may, at any time, file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or other appropriate federal or state agency charged with enforcement of state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, including harassment based on membership in a protected class.

U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
5 Post Office Square  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02109-3921  
Telephone: (617) 289-0111 <http://www.ed.gov>

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination  
436 Dwight St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rm. 220  
Springfield, MA 01103  
Telephone: (413) 739-2145  
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)  
John F. Kennedy Federal Building  
475 Government Center  
Boston, MA 02203  
Telephone: (800) 669-4000 <http://www.eeoc.gov/>

**Definition of Bullying:** The repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: Causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property. Places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

### **Electronic Device Policies**

All electronic devices are to be **off and away in student lockers** during the school day (7:35am-3:15pm). Cell phones, cameras, mp3 players, and other similar items are both distracting and disruptive to the school's learning environment. To ensure that each student is provided with the education they deserve, any electronic device that is seen or heard by a staff member during the school day will be confiscated and brought to the office. A parent/guardian will be called to pick up the device at their earliest convenience. GFMS is not responsible for the loss of or damage to any such items.

### **Bus Rules**

Students may ride the school bus to and from school if they live 1.5 or more miles from school, unless their behavior endangers the health and safety of other students on the bus.

Consequences of breaking the rules on the bus may include a reprimand by the bus driver, parent notification by telephone or letter, parent conference, and suspension from riding the bus for three or more days. **Parents are responsible for the student's school attendance during a period of bus suspension.** *\*\*Please refer to the district policy JICC-R (also EEAEC-R) at [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org).\*\**

### **Dances and Field Trips**

Events such as dances and field trips are part of the social, emotional, and academic growth of our students. To ensure the safety and success of such activities, students attending dances and field trips are expected to follow all school policies and rules. Whether on school property or off, during school hours or not, the expectations and consequences are the same.

Students who have been in-school or out-of-school suspended within the two weeks prior to a dance or field trip and students who have un-served ASR's will not be permitted to attend the event. Parents of students whose behavior is deemed to be unsafe may be asked to accompany their child on field trips. Students must be in attendance at school on the day of an evening event in order to participate.

Students wishing to bring guests from another school to a dance must complete a guest form available at the office. Deadlines for the completion of these forms will be strictly adhered to. **All guests must be pre-approved by the principal and only guests who are 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> graders and in good standing at their respective schools will be allowed to attend a middle school dance.**

### **Appropriate Use of Technology Policies**

Students in the middle school will have access to computers to enhance their education. Our primary mode of monitoring internet use is through direct supervision by our staff as well as internet filters as required by federal law. However, such filters do not block all inappropriate websites. An internet use contract is sent home with students in the beginning of the year for them and their parents to review the entire policy and sign an agreement to abide by such policy. The use policy explains our procedures for acceptable use of computer networks. These privileges are revocable dependent upon compliance with the policy. A user's failure to comply with the policy shall result in limited computer access, and other relevant disciplinary actions. There are hard copies of the policy available in the main office for viewing. *\*\*You may also view the district policy IJNDB-R and the Chromebook 1:1 Policy and Loan Agreement at [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org).\*\**

### **Clubs and Sports**

Many different opportunities are available for students to get involved in after school activities. Interscholastic teams are offered for students and involve competition with other local schools (some sports may not be available for sixth graders). Students must be in good academic standing to participate. In accordance with the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), a student who receives an "F" in any course is ineligible for sports during the next marking period. Any student who receives one "F" may apply for a waiver in order to participate in the athletic program. Attending summer school and passing allows the student to play in the fall without using a waiver for fall sports. A student will be granted only one waiver during his/her time at Great Falls Middle School. Student athletes must be in attendance for the entire school day to participate in practice or games. Student athletes are responsible for making up any work missed due to athletic early dismissals. [www.highschoolsports.net](http://www.highschoolsports.net) provides information regarding sports schedules of the middle and high school teams as well as pictures and videos from games.

In addition to interscholastic sports, there are a variety of clubs available to accommodate specific student interests such as Student Council, Yearbook, Band, Chorus, GSA, Peer Mediation, Hawkeye Magazine, Photography Club, and more, changing from year to year.

Extracurricular activities sponsored by the district are nondiscriminatory in that:

- The Gill-Montague Regional School District provides equal opportunity for all students to participate in intramural and interscholastic sports;
- Extracurricular activities or clubs sponsored by the Gill-Montague Regional School District do not exclude students on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

### **Managing the care of students with athletic concussions**

Research has estimated that 5-10% of high school or college contact sports athletes sustain a concussion each year. These estimates likely understate the true incidence of concussion. In one investigation over 50% of high school football athletes did not report their injury to a parent, coach, or medical professional. A concussion is an alteration of mental status resulting from the brain being jolted inside of the skull due to a blow to the head or body. Among the many symptoms associated with concussion, headache, dizziness, confusion, amnesia, nausea, and disorientation are commonly reported. Loss of consciousness however, only occurs in less than 10% of all injuries and is not an indicator of concussion severity. Also following the injury the athlete may experience other difficulties such as sensitivity to light and sound, forgetfulness, fatigue and emotional changes such as anxiety or depression.

Most athletes who sustain a concussion can fully recover as long as the brain had time to heal before sustaining another hit; but relying only on an athlete's self-report of symptoms to determine injury recovery is inadequate as many high school athletes are not aware of the signs and symptoms of injury, the severity of concussive injuries pose, or they may feel pressure from coaches, parents, and/or teammates to return to play as quickly as possible. One or more of these factors will likely result in under-diagnosing the injury and a premature return to play. Research has shown that young concussed athletes that return to play too soon, before their brain has healed, are highly vulnerable to more prolonged post-concussion syndrome or, in rare cases a catastrophic neurological injury known as Second Impact Syndrome. Therefore, we encourage the following care when an athlete sustains a concussion in a school-sponsored sporting event.

1. When the concussion occurs, the injured athlete should visit the local hospital emergency room or review their condition with their primary care physician to ensure there is not a need for emergency medical care.
2. Then a care team consisting of the student's primary care physician and parents, along with the athletic trainer, head coach and athletic director should monitor the symptoms of the injury.

Concussion is one of the most complex injuries faced by medical professional as the signs and symptoms are not always straightforward and the effects and severity of the injury can be difficult to determine. The injury occurs in absence of structural changes in brain tissue, generally making traditional neuro-diagnostic tests such as CT, MRI and EEG insensitive. Therefore, we encourage a third step in the concussion care process.

3. Engage the injured athlete in battery of tests that include a combination of self-report symptoms, balance, and neuro-cognitive testing. The combined assessment will provide a more sensitive and objective evaluation of the effects of the concussion that will help better determine when it is safe for the athlete to return to play.

### **Students and Families in Transition**

If, for any reason, you find your home situation such that you do not currently have a place for your family to live, the school district will help you by making sure that your children can still attend their schools on a daily basis, receive transportation, meals and all additional supports to help you in such a difficult time. This is not only the right thing for us to do; it is also both federal and state law. Please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal at 863-7300.

## Food Services

### Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks

The Gill-Montague Regional School District Food Service Program takes pride in serving nutritious meals that follow USDA Nutrition Standards. Meal calendars that detail what will be offered for breakfast and lunch are available on our website: go to the “Students” section and choose “School Menus.” Since August 2018, we are a “free school meals for all” school. Breakfast: Breakfast is available to all students beginning at 7:30 am in the cafeteria or from our mobile Breakfast Cart. In the event of a delayed opening, no breakfast will be served. Lunch: Our cafeteria offers several options each day for lunch. The main meal is free to all; a la carte items are priced individually and must be paid for. A bagged lunch is available on half-days to students who sign up the previous school day.

### Payment Methods

Great Falls Middle School students can pay with cash or pre-pay using a PaySchoolsCentral account. To set up an account, you will need a student identification number, which you can get by looking at your student ID or contacting the kitchen manager at 413-863-7315. Visit the GMRSD Food Services webpage at [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org) for more detailed information on the PaySchoolCentral program. When students owe money to food services, we will notify their parents/guardians and expect them to settle the bill in a timely manner. Payment can be made with cash or a check, or through the student’s PaySchoolsCentral account. All accounts must be settled by the end of the school year. Seniors’ accounts should be settled prior to graduation.

### Peanut/Food Allergies

It is important that you notify the school nurse and school food service staff of any food allergies. The GFMS/TFHS cafeteria does serve peanut butter and peanut products; there is seating available for those with contact allergies that is sanitized between meals. *\*\*Please refer to the GMRSD policy manual on the district website ([www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org)) for the full district policy regarding food allergies.\*\**

### School Resource Officer

#### **(Adapted from a Memorandum of Understanding between the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Montague Police Department)**

The goal of the formal working relationship between the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Montague Police Department is to provide a safe, secure, just and violence-free educational setting. A collaborative approach between the district and the police department should advance the missions of both institutions as they serve the young people of the community. The district and the police department agree to coordinate their preventive measures and their response to violent, delinquent, or criminal acts by students which occur on school property, on school buses, or at school sponsored or school related events. The presence of law enforcement in schools should not result in unnecessary escalations, citations, arrests, detentions, use of force, or introduction of students into the criminal justice system. It continues to remain the sole prerogative of school officials to enforce the code of conduct and impose discipline for infractions of school rules and policies. The main duties of the school resource officer (SRO) include developing rapport with students and staff, working with school staff to provide preventive help and services to students and families, investigating crime committed on school grounds, supporting plans for crisis management, and serving as a contact for support services within and outside the school. The SRO is based in the secondary building but spends time working in each district school.

### Animals in School *\*\*Please see the District website at [gmrtd.org](http://gmrtd.org) for the full policy. \*\**

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building Principal. The School District is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment. School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

For the complete Great Falls Middle School Handbook, and for the Policy Manual of the Gill Montague Regional School District, please go to [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org).  
GFMS reserves the right to revise this handbook between printings.  
All handbook references to parents are inclusive of parent/guardian/caregivers.

Thank you for reading! You make Great Falls GREAT!

