

# DeSoto Middle School Student/Parent Handbook 2023-2024



## Table of Contents

District Mission Statement	4
District Vision Statement	4
District Superintendent, School Board, and School Administration	5
Message from Principal Mr. Damien Jones	6
DeSoto County Middle School Mission Statement	7
DeSoto County Middle School Vision Statement	7
DeSoto County Middle School Expectations	7
DeSoto Middle School Calendar of Important Events for 2023-2024	8
DeSoto Middle School Bell Schedules	9
Arrival/Departure Procedures	10
Grading System	10
Report Cards	10
Access to Student Grades/Attendance	11
National Junior Honor Society	11
Attendance Information	12
Tardy Procedures	12
Leaving School Grounds	12
Bus Passes	13
Conduct of Students	13
Discipline of Students	13
Dress Code	14
Prohibited Items	15
Hall Passes	15
Public Displays of Affection	15
Theft	16
Gambling	16
Lost/Damaged Textbooks	17
Skyward Family Access	17
Guidance Department	17
Transcripts	18
Guidelines for Registration and Schedule Changes	18
Change of Address	18
Visitors	18

Cafeteria Information	19
Cafeteria Expectations	19
School Insurance	19
Field Trips	19
Lost and Found	20
Cell Phones/Electronic Equipment	20
Chromebook Repair	22
Use of School Phones	22
Fire Safety	23
Bomb Threats	23
Severe Weather Warning	23
Student Activities	23
Rules for School Activities	23
Attendance Requirements for Participation in School Activities	23-24
Clinic Rules	24
School Advisory Council (SAC)	24-25
Clubs and Organizations	25
Athletic Programs	25
Participation in Interscholastic Extracurricular Activities	25
Satisfactory Conduct	25
Media Center	25
Whom to See	26
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer	26
Student Records	27
Comprehensive Health Education for Grades K-12	28
Notice of Rights under FERPA	28
Teacher/Student/Parent Contract (English)	29
Teacher/Student/Parent Contract (Spanish)	30

## THE SCHOOL BOARD OF DESOTO COUNTY



### **Vision:**

The DeSoto Way: Building minds leveraging all available resources to ensure every graduate is ready for college, career, and life.

### **Mission:**

The School District of DeSoto County will partner with parents and the community to:

- **D**eliver a safe and secure learning environment.
- **O**ptimize communication to strengthen inclusivity.
- **G**uarantee students have equitable access to rigorous engaging instruction.
- **S**hape minds to build a strong social-emotional foundation for responsible citizenship.

*This is the DeSoto Way.*

**Go DOGS!**



# **DeSoto Middle School Student/ Parent Handbook**

## **Superintendent of Schools**

Dr. Bobby Bennett

## **Assistant Superintendent**

Dr. Jake Reynolds

## **Administration**

Damien Jones, Principal

Timothy Edsall, Assistant Principal

Brittany Hines, Dean of Students

Dr. David Boland, Dean of Students

## **DeSoto District School Board**

Jami Schueneman, District 1

Dr. Sharon Goodman, District 2

Karen Chancey, District 3

Asena Mott, District 4

Kelly Mercer, District 5

## **School Board Attorney**

Sarah L. Johnston

### **Foreword**

The purpose of this handbook is to explain the policies, procedures and expectations of DeSoto Middle School. It will be discussed with all students and should be used by our students and their parents as a source of information throughout the school year.

Please read this handbook carefully with your child and return the last page signed to your son or daughter's homeroom teacher. Parent and student signatures indicate that you have both read and understand the expectations of DeSoto Middle School.

### **All Policies Apply**

This handbook contains policies, procedures and guidelines for matters that are essential to the operation of the school. It is in no way intended to change or replace county or state established guidelines, policies or statutes. It is requested that comments, corrections and recommendations for additions and changes be submitted to the office. Periodic revisions will be made on a page-by-page basis in bulletin form.

## **Message from the Principal**

Welcome Students and Parents/Guardians,

We are excited to welcome you to DeSoto Middle School for the 2023-2024 school year!

Our staff is ready to provide a quality education for every student that enters our school. Our doors are always open. If there is ever a question and/or concern, there will always be someone here to help lead you in the right direction. Again, we want to say welcome to each and every one of you. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you and continued growth! GO BULLDOGS!

Regards,

Damien Jones, M.Ed.  
Principal

### **DeSoto Middle School Mission Statement**

To provide all students with a positive learning environment, focused on building relationships, high levels of student engagement, and setting high expectations with academic rigor.

### **DeSoto Middle School Vision Statement**

To provide a positive school culture that is student-focused, promoting the development of the whole child and inspiring lifelong learners.

### **DeSoto Middle School Student Expectations**

Bulldogs BITE!

1. **B**e Respectful
2. **I**nitiate Kindness
3. **T**ake Responsibility
4. **E**nthusiastically Learn

## DeSoto Middle School Calendar of Important Events for 2023-2024

August 3	6th grade Open House
August 7	7th and 8th grade Open House
August 10	Students' First Day
<hr/>	
September 4	Labor Day (No School)
September 13	PD and Teacher Work Day (No School)
<hr/>	
October 11	End 1st Quarter Grading Period
October 18	PD and Records Day (No School)
<hr/>	
November 18-26	Thanksgiving Holiday (No School)
<hr/>	
December 21	End 2nd Quarter Grading Period
December 22	Records Day (No School)
December 23-31	Winter Break (No School)
<hr/>	
January 1-7	Winter Break (No School)
January 8	School Resumes
January 15	Martin Luther King Day (No School)
<hr/>	
February 14	PD and Teacher Work Day (No School)
<hr/>	
March 11-15	Spring Break (No School)
March 19	End 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter Grading Period
March 20	PD and Records Day (No School)
March 29	Good Friday (No School)
<hr/>	
May 23	Last Day for Students





## DAILY BELL SCHEDULE 2023-2024

<b>BELL SCHEDULE</b>		<b>LUNCH SCHEDULE</b>	
<b>BELL SCHEDULE</b>	<b>PERIOD/DESCRIPTION</b>		
8:32a-9:40a	1 <sup>st</sup> Period	11:00a-11:30a	A: 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade
9:44a-10:52a	2 <sup>nd</sup> Period	12:14p-12:44p	B: 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
10:56a-12:48p	3 <sup>rd</sup> Period (Lunch)	11:37a-12:07a	C: 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
12:52p-2:00p	4 <sup>th</sup> Period		
2:04p-3:12p	5 <sup>th</sup> Period		

### **Arrival to School**

School gates will open at 7:35 am. Students should be dropped off at the front of the school and should not be left unattended prior to 7:35 am. All students arriving prior to 7:50 am will be directed to wait in the cafeteria. At 7:50, students may eat breakfast at the cafeteria or wait for the start of school in their designated common area. The bell for reporting to Homeroom will ring at 8:15. Designated common areas are as follows:

- 6th Grade- Cafeteria
- 7th Grade- Gym
- 8th Grade- Pavilion.

### **Departure from School**

If you ride a bus or parent pick up, you are to exit the building and go directly to the loading zone designated for your departure. Loading zones are identified and procedures for parent pick up or buses must be followed. Walkers and bike riders are to leave the building immediately and go directly home. Students are not permitted to socialize with bus riders or other students and then leave campus. Students are not to take shortcuts through private property. No loitering on school grounds will be permitted. Students are not to visit another school's campus.

### **GRADING SYSTEM**

Report card grades are issued with letter grades. The grades represent the academic achievement of the student in a particular course. Report cards will be distributed after the end of every nine (9) week grading period. Refer to the school calendar for specific dates. A grade of D represents a minimum passing grade for each course offered. A grade of an F represents a failure to achieve academic credit for the course.

### **Report Cards**

It is the firm belief of The School District of DeSoto County that excellence in education requires community commitment, and one of the cornerstones of this belief is communication between home and school. Good communication is informative, purposeful and ongoing. It should include the following:

- Progress reports at the 4 ½ week period, of each quarter, for all students;
- Interim reporting - daily, weekly, or an “as needed basis” for students performing below grade level;
- Nine-week report cards to include information on the following:
  - Absences and tardiness;
  - Grades which reflect;
    - mastery of performance standards as outlined in the state course descriptions
    - mastery of standards levels in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science as appropriate;
  - Indication to parents when a student is working at a level below that expected for his/her assigned grade placement.
- Annual report of student progress towards achieving state and district expectations for mastery of standards in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science, based on results of district and statewide testing
- All progress reports and report cards will be available on Skyward.

## Access to Student Grades/Attendance

Parents/Guardians are able to check on the academic progress and attendance of their student(s) through the Skyward Parent Portal at mydesotoschool.com. Parents/Guardians must get their unique login credentials from the Guidance Secretary.

## National Junior Honor Society

Membership in this chapter is an honor bestowed upon deserving students by the faculty and shall be based on the criteria of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. Membership in this chapter shall be known as active, honorary, and alumni. Active members become alumni members at graduation.

Eligibility:

- a. Candidates eligible for selection to this chapter must be in the second semester of 6th grade, or enrolled in 7th or 8th grade.
- b. To be eligible for selection to membership in this chapter, the candidate must have been enrolled for a period equivalent to one semester at DeSoto Middle school.
- c. Candidates eligible for election to the chapter shall have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- d. Upon meeting the grade level, enrollment, and GPA standards, candidates shall then be considered based on their service, leadership, character, and citizenship.
- e. The student has received no more than one DeSoto Middle School Referral or has not been suspended from school for a disciplinary action. Referrals that result in time-out or detention do not count. The DeSoto Middle School Honor Society is based upon the qualities Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship and Service. To remain a member, a student must remain in good academic standing and exemplify good behavior.

Discipline and Dismissal of Members:

- f. Probation from the NJHS will occur if a student's grades fall below a 3.5 GPA or if a student earns a grade of "C" or lower for any marking period. Any student placed on probation will be given one marking period to improve his or her status. If a student fails to improve their academic status, then he /she will be removed from the National Junior Honor Society and will not be allowed to join in the future.
- g. Any student receiving two or more Discipline Referrals resulting in S.S.P (In School Suspension) and/or an Out of School Suspension (O.S.S.) will be removed from the Honor Society.

### **Attendance Information**

The School Board maintains that daily school attendance is essential to the educational success of each student. Students are expected to be in school and in class on time in order to receive full benefit from the instructional programs of the School District of DeSoto County. Parents are expected to notify the school when their child is absent according to individual school guidelines.

*Florida Statute 1003.24  
School Board Policy 5200*

An attendance contract will be implemented for absences when either of the scenarios below occur:

1. Ten unexcused absences throughout the year.
2. Five unexcused absences in a month.

### **Reporting Student Absence**

*Florida Statute 1003.23(2)*

There must be communication between the school and home regarding each absence. On the day of the absence, contact must be made with the student's individual school (phone call or email). Written excuses shall be required of all students upon their return to school **within 3 school days** following an absence. Failure to provide a written excuse within this timeframe may result in an unexcused absence.

### **Tardiness, Leaving School Grounds without Permission**

1. Tardy - The term "tardy" means being late to school, class, or an activity, with or without permission of parents/guardians. Students must be in the classroom before the bell rings.
2. Leaving School Grounds Without Permission - Students are not permitted to leave school grounds without authorization. All related absences will be considered unexcused.

**Note:** Excessive tardiness, leaving school grounds without permission, and/or skipping class may be subject to disciplinary action.

*Florida Statutes 1003.26  
School Board Policy 5200; 5130; 5230*

### **Leaving School Grounds**

**No student may leave campus once they arrive on school grounds whether by bus, car, or on foot without the permission of the administration or without a parent/guardian/designee officially signing them out through the attendance office. Please do not request that a student be excused to leave campus for lunch due to the fact that the lunch period is only 30 minutes. Additionally, students are not allowed to have fast food lunch brought to them unless the parent/guardian is staying for lunch with the student.**

### **Bus Passes**

If a student needs to ride a bus other than his/her regular bus, he/she must have a bus pass. A note signed by a parent/guardian must be brought to the discipline office. The note must include a phone number where the parent/guardian may be reached for verification. Once all of the requirements have been met a bus pass will be issued.

### **Conduct of Students**

At DeSoto County Middle School, student behavior is governed by a board approved Code of Student Conduct. **We urge all students and parents/guardians to review the Code of Student Conduct as soon as possible and occasionally throughout the school year.** At DeSoto County Middle School proper conduct is the responsibility of each student. Rules and regulations are intended only as guides.

They are also necessary for those persons who have not fully developed an understanding of the basic principle of conducting themselves, so as not to become nuisances or to interfere with the rights of others. Each student should strive to make our school attractive and orderly. This goal can be attained by each individual accepting and abiding by the principles outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

### **Discipline of Students**

Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct

### **Warning to Students**

Any student found in violation of any article included in this manual during any part of the school year will risk forfeiture of his/her privileges to participate in any school or class activity. This includes, but not limited to dances, class or organizational trips, athletic events and competition.

### **Dress Code**

*Florida Statute 1001.43, 1006.07, School Board Policy 5511*

Effective July 1, 2011, Florida Statute prohibits a student, while on the grounds of a public school during the regular school day, from wearing clothing that exposes underwear or body parts in an indecent or vulgar manner or that disrupts the orderly learning environment.

Any student who violates the dress policy is subject to specified disciplinary actions prescribed by Florida law. Please review the *Discipline Matrix* in this document for additional details.

Responsibility for the dress and appearance of students enrolled in any school within the School District of DeSoto County primarily rests with parents and the students themselves. Some student apparel may not be appropriate to wear to school even though that same apparel may be appropriate in other settings.

The DeSoto County School Board believes that there is a relationship between student attire and classroom behavior, attitude, and achievement. The objectives of this serious and conservative dress code are to bring more dignity to the classroom, to have fewer classroom distractions, to help achieve stronger discipline, and to help provide guidelines for appropriate attire as student's transition from the classroom environment to the world of work or postsecondary settings.

To assist parents and students in making appropriate fashion and grooming decisions for school, the School Board has established the following guidelines for appearance and dress.

A school may elect to participate in a uniform dress code which follows school board guidelines and which receives school board approval. Once a uniform dress code is approved for a school, students must follow the school's adopted code or face consequences as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct* and the *Discipline Matrix*.

**It is expected that students will wear the following:**

1. Clothing and hairstyles which are not harmful, disruptive, or hazardous to health or safety
2. Appropriate undergarments at all times. Undergarments are to remain unexposed
3. Footwear which is appropriate to activities and conditions
4. Any clothing deemed appropriate by the individual school's dress code policy

**It is also expected that students will not wear the following:**

1. The wearing on campus of hats, caps, headgear (including hoodies or any clothing covering the head) or sunglasses except at authorized athletic practices or activities is prohibited. There may be certain exceptions for medical conditions and physical education classes held outside. The principal will determine these exceptions. (F.S. 1001.43(1)(b))
2. Apparel, emblems, insignias, badges, or symbols that display obscenities, are sexually suggestive, or which promote or advertise the use of tobacco products, alcohol, drugs, violence or other illegal activities.
3. Apparel or symbols which are offensive to any specific group or which are identified with gang, secret society, or cult involvement
4. Any articles of clothing or jewelry that could likely cause injury or disruption, such as but not limited to, inappropriate tattoos, a spiked bracelet that could be used as a weapon, decorative chains and/or piercings which are designed or worn in a fashion that could easily cause injury
5. Halters, backless or sleeveless dresses or tops, spaghetti straps, tube tops, tank tops, muscle shirts, tops with low or revealing necklines, **ANY** pants and/or shorts (including jeans) that have holes and/or tears, or any other clothing which may be distracting unless covered by an appropriate outer garment which remains as part of the outfit. In addition, the midriff shall not be exposed.
6. Form fitting, body-hugging clothes, including leggings and/or workout pants.
7. Hairstyles, hair colors, and excessive make-up that distract or cause commotion.
8. Bedroom slippers, house shoes, "Heelie" skate shoes, or heels exceeding 1.5 inches in height.
9. Crocs, slides, and any other shoe that does not have a strap around the heel are prohibited due to student safety on campus.

Note: **The Principal and/or the Principal's designee has the final authority for interpreting whether a student's apparel conforms to the dress code.** When it is determined that a student's clothing does not comply with the dress code, or is disruptive or inappropriate, a parent/guardian may be asked to bring an appropriate change of clothes to school, or a student may be sent home to change clothes.

Note: **The Principal may modify the dress code for extra-curricular school functions.**

### **Articles Prohibited in School**

Items such as firearms, bullets, lighters, matches, vape pens, lasers, toy guns, bandanas, water pistols, glass items, knives, hard balls, rollerblades, skateboards or any shoe with rollers are prohibited.

Absolutely no gum, candy, drinks, or food are allowed in the buildings (other than water). This includes breakfast and lunch items. Any lunch items brought on campus must be stored in the student's backpack and remain sealed until the student is in the cafeteria.

Electronic devices, including cell phones, headphones, tablets, iPods, radios, wireless earbuds, Bluetooth speakers and cameras are restricted during the school day (from the first bell at 8:25 until the last dismissal bell). These items may only be used under direct teacher supervision for instructional purposes. These items are brought to school **AT YOUR OWN RISK**.

Prohibited articles (contraband) will be confiscated and may only be picked up by a parent/guardian between 8:10 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. on normal school days.

The school is not responsible for lost or stolen prohibited items and will not take responsibility to recover such items. Items lost or stolen should be reported to law enforcement.

### **Hall Passes**

Pupils are not permitted in the hallways without a signed hall pass from a staff member. Each individual student will be given an Emergency Tardy/ Restroom Pass quarterly. Lavatory usage during class should be limited. No more than one student may be dismissed at one time. In addition, passes may not be given for use of the telephone during class time. Students caught falsifying or misusing passes are subject to disciplinary action.

Students must also seek and receive permission from the teacher of their scheduled class prior to missing all or any portion of the class. Students who solicit passes from other teachers, counselors, or support personnel, without prior approval, may find those passes unacceptable to the scheduled teacher.

The names of students who are repeatedly late to class, in the halls without a pass, or who abuse the hall pass privilege by remaining out of class for an excessive amount of time, will be recorded. Those students may face disciplinary action, including being placed on a pass restriction that would only allow them to leave a classroom for emergency purposes.

### **Public Display of Affection**

School is not the proper place for students to demonstrate affection for one another. Kissing, hugging, etc. are activities prohibited during school hours. Violators are to be sent to the office and disciplined according to the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Theft**

The School District of DeSoto County and DeSoto County Middle School cannot assume responsibility for money and valuable property brought to school by students. However, we are concerned and willing to aid in preventing thefts as well as recovering stolen property. Each student must take proper precaution to protect his/her own property. Also, each student is responsible for property loaned to him/her such as textbooks and library books. The student should strongly consider the following suggestions:

- Never bring large amounts of money or extremely valuable objects to school.
- Be sure to take your purses, books, etc. while changing classes.
- Never leave purses or other property unattended.
- Never loan bicycles or other items
- In PE class, it is recommended to leave valuables locked in a gym locker.
- Report any thefts personally witnessed or any information you might have concerning a theft.

## **Gambling**

Any gambling, including but not limited to cards and dice, in which the exchange of money and/or goods occurs is considered illegal.

## **Lost/Damaged School Property**

Students are responsible for the care and safety of materials loaned to them including but not limited to textbooks, library books, and Chromebooks. If a textbook is lost or damaged the teacher of the course should be notified immediately. Students will be charged for any lost or damaged items.

## **Skyward Family Access**

The School District of DeSoto County is excited to offer you Skyward Family Access, a web-based service for students and their parents or guardians. Using Family Access, parents can check grades, monitor attendance, email teachers and school officials, see disciplinary information, access report cards, and much more.

Each parent or guardian requesting access to Family Access will need to bring a completed form and photo ID to the Student Enrollment office at 530 LaSolona Ave. The form is available on the District page, using the Skyward Family Access Request Form link. Please print the form and fill it out by hand.

After submitting your form, you will receive your username and password for Family Access. Students will have similar access to their information using Skyward Student Access, available from school, home, or anywhere else.

You can always quickly reach this page with news of the latest portal information by visiting <http://desotoschools.com/familyinfo/>



## Guidance Department

The Guidance Department is available to help the students with the difficult decisions both academic and personal they may face. The School Counselors will work with every student to plan their most appropriate educational program. They will also work with the students to help them develop self-discipline and a good self-concept. Students requesting an appointment with their School Counselor are requested to make the appointment with the guidance secretary.

School Counselor	Grade Level	Student Responsibility Alphabetically
Mrs. Galloway	Grades 6-8	A-L
Mrs. Keller	Grades 6-8	M-Z

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Personal information between students and counselors is only exchanged between those two people, unless permission is granted by the student to share the information with another individual or if someone is in danger of being injured or injuring themselves. This is also true for release of transcripts or other pertinent information.

### Transcripts

All students will be entitled to official transcripts mailed from the enrollment department at the district office at no charge.

### Guidelines for Registration and Schedule Changes

1. All students are to be scheduled for seven (7) courses unless approved by administration
2. Students are to be scheduled in accordance with the following priorities:
3. Schedule changes shall be made only for educationally sound reasons that will be of long-range benefit to the student.
  - a. Promotion requirements
  - b. Course availability, class load, etc.
  - c. Student's ability and/or previous record
  - d. Student's interest
4. Students may not drop a course after 10 class periods from the start of the course or two weeks. Any parent believing that his/her child was incorrectly scheduled should contact the child's School Counselor within the first week of the semester.
5. The Guidance Department has developed a Skyward Counselor Request for students to use when they wish to see a member of the Guidance Department about schedule changes, academic standing, scholarship information, and/or personal reasons. Students may submit a request using the appropriate link in Skyward.

## **Change of Address/Phone Number**

Students who move within the district during the school year must notify the District Enrollment Office immediately in order to update the student's information and to help ensure that any information mailed by the school or district will reach the student and parent/guardian. This information can also be updated by the parent/guardian using the Parent Portal on Skyward.

## **Visitors**

All visitors to the school must register at the reception desk in the front office. At this time the visitor will be required to present either their driver's license or a state issued identification card. The visitor's identification will be scanned into Raptor and they must be cleared before they can enter the school. The only people who are permitted on campus are:

1. Students and employees
2. Visitors with permits
3. Vendors and volunteers

No student visitors will be allowed on campus during the day.

## **Cafeteria**

The School District of DeSoto County will participate in the Community Eligibility Option which will allow our district to provide breakfast and lunch to all students free of charge.

Breakfast is served from 7:50 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. each morning. Students will not be permitted on campus prior to 8:00 am. Parents are welcome to eat with their student; however, it will be in a designated area, subject to administrative approval. Parents must check in at the front office and receive a visitor's pass before entering the cafeteria. Parents will only be permitted to eat with their child on the patio. Only contacts on Skyward will be permitted to eat with students. Parents who fail to comply with these cafeteria guidelines will lose this privilege. Parents will not be permitted to deliver food to students during the day. Food from home should be brought by the student at the beginning of the day and stored appropriately in their backpack.

## **Cafeteria Expectations**

1. Stay in your assigned seats; do not table hop.
2. Raise your hand to leave your table.
3. Keep your table and area clean.
4. Talk quietly.
5. Only four students to a girl or boy bathroom at a time.
6. Possible consequences for cafeteria infractions: table reassignment, lunch detention, Discipline Referral.

*No food deliveries will be accepted (i.e., fast food, pizza and party items)*

## **School Insurance**

All students are encouraged to purchase school insurance. All athletes, band members, cheerleaders, and others who will participate in any extra-curricular school activities are required to have 24-hour school insurance, athletic insurance, or the appropriate waiver in accordance with school policy. It is the responsibility of the coaches and sponsors to verify that a student has the appropriate health/medical insurance. Students must have health/medical insurance to participate in any school-related activities (field trips, contest, etc.); if the student does not have the appropriate health/medical insurance they are not allowed to participate in any school-related activities.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips are an important part of many courses at DeSoto County Middle School. Students are expected to participate and may be held responsible for any information obtained while on a field trip. In order to attend an all-day field trip, it is the student's responsibility to maintain good attendance and academic standing in all classes. All students must be passing four of seven classes. Five (5) days prior to the field trip students must turn in all paperwork, which may include but is not limited to a prearranged absence form, parent permission, and a medical release. In case of a medical emergency while on a field trip, students are required to have health/medical insurance.

## **Lost and Found**

All items found should be taken to the front office.

## **Cell Phones/Electronic Devices**

"Wireless communication device" (WCDs) as used in this policy are defined in Bylaw 0100.

The Board is aware that WCDs are used by students and parents to communicate with each other. However, the use of WCDs on school grounds must be appropriately regulated to protect students, staff, and the learning environment. This policy sets forth the District's policy with respect to WCDs.

While students may possess WCDs in school, on school property, during after school activities (e.g., extra-curricular activities) and at school-related functions, they must be powered completely off (i.e., not just placed into vibrate or silent mode) and stored out of sight during school hours.

During after school activities, WCDs shall be powered completely off (not just placed into vibrate or silent mode) and stored out of sight when directed by the administrator or sponsor.

Under certain circumstances, a student may keep his/her WCD "on" with prior approval from the building principal.

Except as authorized by a teacher, administrator, or IEP Team, students are prohibited from using WCDs during the school day, including while off-campus on a field trip, to capture, record, or transmit the words or sounds (i.e., audio) and/or images (i.e., pictures/video) of any student, staff member, or other person. Using a WCD to capture, record, and/or transmit audio and/or pictures/video of an individual without proper consent is considered an invasion of privacy and is not permitted. Students who violate this provision and/or use a WCD to violate the privacy rights of another person may have their WCD confiscated and held until the end of the school day and

may be directed to delete the audio and/or picture/video file. If the violation involves potentially illegal activity, the confiscated WCD may be turned over to law enforcement. The prohibitions herein also include using a WCD or any other device to covertly listen-in or make a recording (audio or video) of any meeting or activity in school. This include placing a WCD or other device with one- or two-way audio and video communication technology (i.e., technology that allows a person to listen to live conversations and sounds taking place in the location where the device is located), within a student's book bag or other property of the student or on the student's person without express written consent from an administrator, IEP Team, or Section 504 Team.

"Sexting" is prohibited at any time on school property or at school functions. As set forth in State law, sexting is the knowing transmission or distribution to another minor by a computer or similar device any photograph or video of any person that depicts nudity and is harmful to minors. Sexting also includes possessing a photo of any person that was transmitted or distributed by another minor that depicts nudity. Such conduct not only is potentially dangerous for the involved students, but can lead to unwanted exposure of the messages and images to others, and could result in criminal violations related to the transmission or possession of child pornography. Such conduct will be subject to discipline and possible confiscation of the WCD.

WCDs, including but not limited to those with cameras, may not be activated or utilized at any time in any school situation where a reasonable expectation of personal privacy exists. These locations and circumstances include, but are not limited to classrooms, gymnasiums, locker rooms, shower facilities, rest/bathrooms, and any other areas where students or others may change clothes or be in any stage or degree of disrobing or changing clothes. The Superintendent and building principals are authorized to determine other specific locations and situations where use of a WCD is absolutely prohibited.

Students shall have no expectation of confidentiality with respect to their use of WCDs on school premises/property.

Students may not use a WCD in any way that might reasonably create in the mind of another person an impression of being threatened, humiliated, harassed, embarrassed, or intimidated. See Policy 5517.01 – Bullying and Harassment. In particular, students are prohibited from using WCDs to: (1) transmit material that is threatening, obscene, disruptive, or sexually explicit or that can be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based upon their race, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation/transgender identity), disability, age, religion, ancestry, or political beliefs; and (2) engage in "sexting" - i.e., sending, receiving, sharing, viewing, or possessing pictures, text messages, e-mails, or other materials of a sexual nature (i.e., sexting) in electronic or any other form. As set forth in State law, sexting is the knowing transmission or distribution to another minor by a computer or similar device any photograph or video of any person that depicts nudity and is harmful to minors. Sexting also includes possessing a photo of any person that was transmitted or distributed by another minor that depicts nudity and is harmful to minors. Violation of these prohibitions shall result in disciplinary action. Furthermore, such actions will be reported to local law enforcement and child services as required by law.

Students are also prohibited from using a WCD to capture, record, and/or transmit test information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty. Likewise, students are prohibited from using WCDs to receive such information.

Possession of a WCD by a student at school during school hours and/or during extra-curricular activities is a privilege that may be forfeited by any student who fails to abide by the terms of this policy, or otherwise abuses this privilege.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or confiscation of the WCD. The building principal may also refer the matter to law enforcement or child services if the violation involves an illegal activity (e.g., child pornography, sexting). Discipline will be imposed on an escalating scale ranging from a warning to an expulsion based on the number of previous violations and/or the nature of or circumstances surrounding a particular violation. If the WCD is confiscated, it will be released/returned to the student's parent/guardian after the student complies with any other disciplinary consequences that are imposed, unless the violation involves potentially illegal activity in which case the WCD may be turned over to law enforcement. A confiscated device will be marked in a removable manner with the student's name and held in a secure location in the building's central office until it is retrieved by the parent/guardian or turned over to law enforcement. School officials will not search or otherwise tamper with WCDs in District custody unless they reasonably suspect that the search is required to discover evidence of a violation of the law or other school rules. Any search will be conducted in accordance with Policy 5771 – Search and Seizure. If multiple offenses occur, a student may lose his/her privilege to bring a WCD to school for a designated length of time or on a permanent basis.

A person who discovers a student using a WCD in violation of this policy is required to report the violation to the building principal, assistant principal, or dean.

Students are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their WCDs. The Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to, or misuse or unauthorized use of WCDs brought onto its property.

Parents/Guardians are advised that the best way to get in touch with their child during the school day is by calling the school office.

### Use of School Phones

- No student will be called to the school phone during school time. Messages will be taken and relayed. Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis.

### Fire Safety

When the fire alarm is heard students should follow the teacher's instructions as to where to go. Students should proceed with the teacher to the nearest exit. Students with passes should exit the building and then rejoin their assigned teacher. The exit patterns for the fire drills are posted near the door of each classroom. Any student participating in horseplay or other inappropriate behavior during drills or during an actual event may be subject to discipline under the Code of Student Conduct. **Any student pulling the fire alarm as a prank will face expulsion.**

### Bomb Threats

When notified of a threat all students are to follow the teacher's instructions as to what to do. **PLEASE NOTE:** It is a felony and federal offense to make any type of false threat against any public institution; violators will be prosecuted.

### Severe Weather Warning

When the alarm is heard or notification made all students are to follow the teacher's instructions as to what to do. Emergency procedures are posted near the door of each classroom.

### Student Activities

Participation in extra-curricular activities provides students with valuable opportunities and experiences. DeSoto County Middle School offers a variety of athletic programs as well as clubs and organizations. We encourage all students to be actively involved. Students who are involved tend to do better academically and enjoy school more than those that are not involved.

### Rules for School Activities

1. The school has authority over all persons attending school activities.
2. Students will conduct themselves in an orderly fashion at all activities.
3. Students will not be permitted to attend an activity if they have been drinking or begin to do so.
4. All chaperones are to be responsible for the behavior of those attending the activity; therefore, everyone will respect their authority. The chaperones shall reprimand as they see fit and necessary. Chaperones must follow closely the rules established by DeSoto County Middle School, the School District of DeSoto County, the FHSAA, and the rules on the school bus.
5. Students must be in attendance for the entire school day in order to participate in any school-related activity on that date or the day prior to the activity if the activity falls on the weekend or a non-school day.
6. All club activities must be adequately supervised and chaperoned.
7. In order to leave campus, a signed parent permission form must be on file for each student.
8. If classes are to be missed, the student must have a pre-arranged absence form signed by each teacher prior to leaving. The principal must approve all activities.

## **Attendance Requirements for Participation in School Activities**

The following attendance requirements are to be followed for students participating in school events:

1. A student who is absent from class(es) on the day of an event will not be allowed to participate in an event on that day unless they have prior approval of the principal.
2. A student who is assigned a detention on the day of an event will not be allowed to participate until after the detention is served.
3. Students who are serving In-School or Out of School Suspension cannot attend or participate in any school function those day(s).
4. Students must be in school the day before an all-day activity during the week or the school day prior to a weekend event.

### **Clinic Rules**

- When a student is sick the school nurse will call the parent if he/she deems it necessary.
- The clinic restroom is available only to those students who are patients in the clinic.
- Students are allowed to visit the clinic during their lunchtime if they are ill, but they must have a pass.
- Students may stay in the clinic for up to 30 minutes; then they must either return to class or make arrangements to go home.
- Only students with a valid pass from school personnel will be permitted to be in the clinic. Students are not allowed to go to the clinic between classes.
- Students must have a permission slip signed by a parent for medical needs/conditions. This form can be obtained from the clinic. Any and all medicines and/or medical needs should be documented on this form.
- All medications of any type brought to school must be checked in with the nurse. No medications are to be carried by the student including over-the-counter medication/drugs.
- Any student checking out of school due to illness or injury must do so through the nurse.
- Emergency cards must be turned in to the nurse with a signature on the back and a working phone number in order to care for the student in an emergency.

### **School Advisory Council**

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is a team of people representing various segments of the community—parents, teachers, students, administrators, support staff, business/ industry people and other interested community members. The purpose of a SAC is to assist in the preparation and evaluation (developing and evaluating) of the results of the school improvement plan and to assist the principal with the annual school budget. Additionally, SAC receives funds to be used at the discretion of the School Advisory Committee. A portion of the money should be used for implementing the school improvement plan." The improvement plan shall include performance indicators which are measurable. Funding for use by the School Advisory Councils should be allocated directly to the School Advisory Councils, should be clearly earmarked for their use and is not subject to override by the Principal or interim approvals by school district staff. These monies may be expended only on programs or projects selected by the school advisory council. Each school in the State of Florida must have a SAC. By law, each SAC must be composed of the principal and an "appropriately balanced" number of "stakeholders." These individuals must be representative of the ethnic, racial and economic makeup of the community served by the school. High schools and vocational technical centers must have students on the SACs. Middle and junior high schools may choose to include students on their SAC. The majority of SAC members (over 50 percent) must not be employed by the SCHOOL DISTRICT on whose SAC they serve. Please check our Facebook and website for monthly meeting dates. We look forward to your input to help improve our school.

## Clubs/Organizations and Athletics

The following are clubs/organizations and athletic programs at DMS:

Academic Team	Chess Club
Band	National Junior Honor Society
Chorus	Student Council
FFA	TV Production Club
Yearbook	JR FBLA

*Contact the administration for the name of the sponsor of any organization you may be interested in joining.*

## Athletic Programs

Softball	Football
Basketball	Cheer
Volleyball	Cross Country

## Participation in Interscholastic Extracurricular Activities

Seventh and eighth grade students must maintain a 2.0 or higher GPA from the previous semester to participate in athletics in accordance with the Florida High School Athletics Association. This applies to 6th grade students after the first semester is completed. Students who are assigned ISS for an entire day or OSS are not allowed to participate in the sport for the duration of the disciplinary action.

## Satisfactory Conduct

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities, he/she must maintain satisfactory conduct. If the student is convicted of, or is found to have committed a felony or a delinquent act that would have been a felony if committed by an adult, regardless of whether adjudication is withheld, the student's participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities is contingent upon established and published school board policy. It is, therefore, up to the local school board to determine if such misconduct disqualifies a student for participation through school board policy.

## Media Center

**Mission Statement:** The Media Center at DeSoto County Middle School is committed to fostering academic excellence in our students. This program began as a way to promote literacy. The Media Center strives to encourage life-long learning, to ensure the individual right of freedom of information, and to expand awareness of our global society and its multi-cultural facets.

To achieve this, the Media Center provides service and instruction to students and staff members, it collaborates with staff to design learning opportunities with resources, information, and technology; and it promotes life-long reading.



**Hours:** The Media Center is open to the students of DeSoto County Middle School from 8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m., Monday – Friday. A valid pass will admit students to the Media Center at any time during the school day.

**Student Conduct:** Disruptive students will be asked to leave the Media Center and their privileges will be revoked if the disruption warrants such action.

**Whom to See**

Attendance Issues Academic	Guidance Counselor	Mrs. Galloway A-L Mrs. Keller M-Z
Class Schedule Issues	Guidance Counselor	Mrs. Galloway A-L Mrs. Keller M-Z
Attendance Issues	Attendance Secretary	Mrs. Beckham
Tardy and Pre-Arranged Absence Form	Attendance Secretary	Mrs. Beckham
Check-out of school	Attendance Secretary	Mrs. Beckham
Athletics	Athletic Director	Mr. Powell
Athletic Physicals/Notary	Principal’s Secretary	Mrs. Baldwin
Clinic	School Nurse	Mrs. Richardson
Chromebooks	Media Center	Mrs. Martin
Mental Health	Social Worker	TBD
Lost or Damaged Textbook	Media Center	Mrs. Martin
Discipline	Dean of Students	6th Grade Ms. Hines 7th Grade TBA 8th Grade Dr. Boland
ESE Support	Staffing Specialist	Ms. Bennett
Insurance	Front Desk	
Migrant Services	Migrant Paraprofessional	Mrs. Menendez

**Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer**

**Unlawful Discrimination Prohibited.** The DeSoto County School Board subscribes to and will comply with the Florida Educational Equity Act. The School Board will ensure implementation of this Act in the following areas: treatment of students; health services, interscholastic, club and intramural athletics; students’ financial assistance; student employment; educational and work environment; and personnel. No person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, age or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits or, be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity except as provided by law.

*General Authority 230.22 FS, 228.2001 FS, DOE Rules 6A-19.01, 6A-19.10.*

**Student Records**

State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.995, Student Records, requires that a student education record be maintained for each pupil enrolled in school. This student record shall be under the control of the principal and shall be kept current. No record may be destroyed or disposed of by any agency unless approval of the Division of Archives, History and Records Management is first obtained. The Division adopts reasonable rules and regulations, which are binding on all agencies relating to the destruction and disposal of records.

The cumulative record shall be open to inspection only by the School Board, Superintendent, the professional staff of the school, the parent or guardian of the pupil, a court of competent jurisdiction and to such other persons as the parent, guardian, or principal may authorize in writing.

- These records contain identifying data (student and parent name, address, birth date, sex, race), academic records, standardized test results, attendance records and health data. The record may also contain family background information, verified reports of serious or recurrent behavior patterns, record of extra-curricular and special programs participation, psychological reports and anecdotal records by professional staff. The principal may maintain a separate disciplinary file for students involved in misconduct to include, but not be limited to, description of misconduct, suspension notice(s), record of disciplinary action(s) taken, etc.
- Parents of students and parents of former students of any state or local educational agency or institution, preschool through higher education, have the right to "inspect and review" all educational records directly related to their children under 18 years of age. In case of legal separation or divorce, either parent may have access to a child's educational record unless an appropriate court order to the contrary has been filed with the school.
- If any material or document in the educational record of a student includes information on more than one student, the parent or adult student seeking access will have the right to inspect and review only those parts that relate to said student or to be informed of the specific information contained in such material.
- Compliance with a request to inspect and review a student's education record should be done as quickly as administratively feasible; under no circumstances should the time element exceed thirty (30) calendar days after the request has been made.
- A waiver may be made with respect to specified classes of persons or institutions. Waivers may be revoked, but a revocation must be in writing. If a parent of a student executes a waiver, the student may revoke that waiver any time after he or she becomes an adult student.
- Access to any student education record or the release of any personally identifiable information without written consent of the parent or adult student is prohibited. The consent must contain the reason for the release; the specific records to be released; and to whom the records are being released. The signed and dated approval must be maintained in the student's cumulative record. The following categories are exempt from the above prohibition. The DeSoto County Public Schools reserve the right to release the following "directory information" without prior permission of the parent:
  - Student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, participation in school sponsored activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, date of graduation and awards received.
- The parent may request the designation of any or all of the above categories as directory information by notifying the principal in writing within ten (10) days of the date of annual notice.
- Each school must maintain a record indicating all parties other than school officials who have requested or obtained access to a student's educational record and to indicate specifically the legitimate interest that each party has in obtaining the information.
- School authorities shall provide parents an opportunity for a hearing to challenge the content of their child's educational records to ensure that the records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise inappropriate data contained therein.
- When a student transfers from DeSoto District Schools to another within the state or out of state, the principal shall send the educational records to the school after a written request has been received from the principal or designated agent of the receiving school. A reasonable effort shall be made to obtain parental permission for release of the records, except for transfers within the district.
- Upon the request for transfer of a student's educational records by educational institutions, the student's parents shall be notified of the transfer, are entitled to review the records, are entitled to a copy of the records if desired, and are entitled to a hearing to challenge the content of the records.
- If a copy of the records is desired, a fee may be charged based upon the cost of the reproduction. The notification may be in the form of a letter to the last address of the parents.

- This notice has been prepared in accordance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and the Final Rules on Educational Records of 1976. Further information is available at the School Board office.

### **Comprehensive Health Education for Grades K-12**

House Bill 1739, which became law on June 30, 1990, mandates Comprehensive Health Education for Grade K-12 at the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year. The law mandates a curriculum to reduce destructive behavior in children, including: early sexual involvement, substance abuse, suicide, activities which result in sexually transmitted diseases and early teenage pregnancy, using materials appropriate to the grade level and values consistent with those of the community. Instruction in human sexuality will take into account the whole person; present ethical and moral dimensions, shall not be an expression of any one sectarian or secular philosophy, and shall respect the conscience and rights of students and parents. All instructional materials, including teachers' manuals, films, tapes, and other supplementary instructional material are available for inspection by parents or guardians of our schools' students. Any parent or guardian wishing to inspect instructional materials is encouraged to contact the school principal and make appropriate arrangements to do so. Any student whose parents make a written request to the school principal shall be exempt from reproductive health or AIDS instructional activities, as requested, with no curricular penalties.

### **Notice of Rights Under FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the School principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible students of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records the Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the School principal (or appropriate official), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedure will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); or a parent or student on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her task. A school official has the legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

(NOTE: FERPA requires the school district to make reasonable attempts to notify the parent or eligible student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.)

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue  
SW Washington, D.C. 20202-5901

## TEACHER/STUDENT/PARENT COMPACT OF DESOTO COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Teacher Agreement:** I believe that each child can be successful. I will:

- Believe that each child can learn and achieve Middle Standards.
- Provide meaningful and appropriate homework and classroom activities.
- Maintain open lines of communication with each student's parent/guardian.
- Provide an emotionally and physically safe environment that promotes learning.
- Provide well planned lessons that will provide for each individual's differences.
- Enforce school and classroom rules fairly.

Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Agreement:** I believe that I can be successful. I will:

- Show respect to all other students and school personnel.
- Attend school and all classes on a regular basis.
- Complete classroom and homework assignment to the best of my ability.
- Believe that I can and will learn.
- Take pride in myself and my school.
- Work cooperatively with my classmates, teachers, and all school staff.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Agreement:** I believe that my child can be successful. I will:

- Provide a home environment that encourages my child to learn.
- Teach my child self-respect, respect for the law, respect for authority in the school, and respect the rights and property of others.
- Make certain my child attends school all day, every day, unless my child is ill.
- Stay aware of what my child is learning.
- Encourage my child to improve comprehension and vocabulary skills through independent reading, and enhance communication skills through problem solving and writing.
- Ensure my child is prepared for learning by reviewing homework, having necessary school supplies, and providing a quiet place to study and read.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Revised for 2023-2024 School Year*

**PACTO DEL MAESTRO/ESTUDIANTE/PADRE DE DESOTO COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Pacto del maestro:** Creo que cada niño puede lograr éxito.

- Creo que cada niño puede aprender y alcanzar mayores niveles de aprendizaje.
- Proveeré actividades significativas y apropiadas para las tareas y actividades de la clase.
- Me mantendré en comunicación con los familiares de los estudiantes.
- Proveeré un ambiente físico y emocional que promueva el aprendizaje.
- Proveeré lecciones bien planeadas y apropiadas por los distintos niveles.
- Aplicaré las reglas de la escuela y de la clase justamente.

Firma del maestro: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pacto del estudiante:** Yo creo que puedo lograr éxito.

- Demostraré respeto a todos los estudiantes y personal de la escuela.
- Asistiré a la escuela y a todas las clases regularmente.
- Terminaré las tareas y los trabajos de la escuela de acuerdo a mi habilidad.
- Creo que yo puedo aprender.
- Me sentiré orgulloso de mí mismo y de mi escuela.
- Trabajaré con mis compañeros de clase, maestros y personal de la escuela.

Firma del estudiante: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pacto del padre:** Yo creo que mi hijo puede lograr éxito.

- Proveeré en casa un ambiente que anime a mi hijo a aprender.
- Enseñare a mi hijo a respetar la ley, la autoridad en la escuela y los bienes y propiedad de los demás.
- Me encargaré de que mi hijo asista a la escuela todo el día, y todos los días al menos que esté enfermo.
- Estaré al tanto de lo que mi hijo esté aprendiendo.
- Animaré a mi hijo a que mejore la comprensión, habilidades del vocabulario a través de la lectura independiente y a que realice habilidades de comunicación a través de resolver problemas, y escritura.
- Me aseguraré de que mi niño esté preparado para el aprendizaje mediante la revisión de las tareas escolares, y que tenga los materials escolares necesarios, y proporcionaré un lugar tranquilo para estudiar y leer.

Firma del padre: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

*Revisado por el año escolar 2023-2024*