

Decorah Middle School



Student Handbook

2026-2027

Dear DMS Parents and Students,

The school has provided a planner to all students at Decorah Middle School. Teachers will routinely have students use their planner to write assignments, test dates, and long-term project completion dates. This will help students to be better organized. Teachers will also use the planner to write notes home. Parents, please check the planner on a regular basis (if the planner is lost, purchase a new planner from the office for \$10.00). Contact teachers as soon as you have a question.

This handbook and school district policies, rules, and regulations are in effect while students are on school grounds, school district property or on property within the jurisdiction of the school district, while on school owned and/or school operated buses or vehicles or chartered buses, while attending or engaged in school activities, and while away from school grounds in that misconduct directly impacts the good order, efficient management, and welfare of the school district or involved students or staff. School district policies, rules, and regulations are in effect 365 days. A violation of a school district policy, expectation, rule, or regulation may result in disciplinary action and may impact a student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities whether the violation occurred while school was in session or while school was not in session.

Students are expected to comply with and abide by the school district's policies, rules, and regulations. Students who fail to abide by the school district's policies, rules, and regulations will be disciplined for conduct which disrupts or interferes with the education program, disrupts the orderly and efficient operation of the school district or school activity, disrupts the rights of other students to obtain their education or to participate in school activities, and/or interrupts the maintenance of a disciplined atmosphere.

School safety is paramount at DMS. Inappropriate behavior can be reported the following ways:

- Call Decorah Middle School—563-382-8427
- Tell any DMS staff member
- Tell a parent
- Use the *Safe School Reporting Form* <https://forms.gle/EcTZtDo7RV7eJhtW7>

Disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to, removal from the classroom, detention, suspension, probationary period, involvement of local law enforcement, and/or expulsion. Discipline can also include prohibition from participating in extracurricular activities, including athletics and fine arts performances. The discipline imposed is based upon the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident. The school reserves and retains the right to modify, eliminate, or establish school district policies, rules, and regulations as circumstances warrant, including those contained in this handbook.

Students, parents, and faculty are expected to know the contents of the handbook and comply with it. Students or parents with questions or concerns may contact DMS, 563-382-8427, for information about the current enforcement of the policies and/or rules or regulations of the school district.

Planner cover designed by Jonathan Crose

DECORAH MIDDLE SCHOOL STAFF AND ASSIGNMENTS

Justin Albers—Principal

Jake Nimrod—Associate Principal/Activities Director

Paula McIntyre—Administrative Assistant (staff emails are in this format: firstname.lastname@decorah.school)

Staff	Assignment	Staff	Assignment
Gene Adams	8 th Science	Shannon Horton	Teacher Librarian
Matthew Amundson	6 th Social Studies	Wes Knaack	8 th Grade American History
Taylor Amundson	6 th Reading	Stacy Knight	5 th ELA
Jaime Bizarri	Music/Chorus	Sarah Kowitz	Orchestra
Casey Bouska	Special Education	Weston Krug	Band
Mackynzi Bouska	Special Education	Danyelle Kruse	App. Digital Skills/Social Media Lit/Coding
Scott Boylen	6 th Science	Matt Kuempel	Student Support
Jonathan Carlson	Physical Education	Jesse Lyon	6 th , 7 th , and 8 th Math
Sarah Casterton	7 th Science	Sarah Nowack	5 th Grade ELA
Matt Cody	Band	Kathy Oftedahl	Special Education/Yearbook
Amy Courtney	Art	Kole Pape	Computer Technician
Pamela Dambek	7 th ELA	Amy Pipho	Physical Education/Health
Sarah Elsbernd	Special Education	Selina Quandahl, RN	School Nurse
Kelly Farley	6 th Math	Grace Redenius	6 th ELA
Zach Fromm	5 th Grade Social Studies	Carrie Reed	7 th Global Studies
Julie Giese	ELL	Bretta Schwartz	Special Education
Chris Hadley	Band	Laura Smith	Director of Special Education
Alyssa Halweg	5 th Grade Math	Heidi Snell-Anderson	5 th Grade Science
Jesse Halweg	7 th and 8 th Grade Math	Lee Stock	Guidance/Mentors
Dana Hogan	Extended Learning Program	Jennifer Thompson	Food Service
Ryan Hogan	8 th ELA	Jessica Uhlenhake	Special Education

Learning - Thriving - Creating Our Legacy

MISSION: *At Decorah Community School District we embrace student learning and well-being as our fundamental purpose; we will, in partnership with our students, families, and community, make the world a better place.*

VISION: Decorah Community School District will be a collaborative, innovative, learning-centered organization empowering students to embrace their personal strengths and create their future.

VALUES: Decorah Community School District is guided by the following core values:

- **Collaboration and Community**

We believe collaboration and community partnerships promote innovation and shared responsibility.

- **Curiosity and Creativity**

- *We believe curiosity and creativity lead to meaningful learning.*

- **Engagement and Excellence**

We believe engagement and excellence foster personal ownership, and pride and joy in work and learning.

- **Equity and Well-being**

We believe equity and well-being ensure a safe learning environment, a sense of belonging, and student success.

- **Integrity and Humility**

We believe integrity and humility create respectful, trusting relationships.

- **Stewardship and Sustainability**

We believe stewardship and sustainability promote efficient and effective operations now and in the future.

DECORAH MIDDLE SCHOOL SAFE SCHOOL RULES

- We will not bully others.
- We will help students who are bullied.
- We will include students who are left out.
- If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school/home.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

It is the policy of the Decorah Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the district's Equity Coordinator, Mr. Justin Albers, Decorah Middle School, 405 Winnebago Street, (563) 382-8427

INFORMATION I NEED

My Email _____

Parent/Guardian Email _____

Prime Time Teacher _____

Teacher's email: firstname.lastname@decorah.school

Mr. Kuempel: matt.kuempel@decorah.school

Mr. Stock: lee.stock@decorah.school

Mr. Stock's Cell Phone Number: 563-380-4058

Parent/Guardian Phone Number _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Number _____

What are my plans when school is dismissed early because of weather? _____

SITE	USERNAME/LOG IN	PASSWORD
Keystone AEA	kaca025	kaca01
Typing club		
Scope		moonsnow2989

IOWA AND NATIONAL HELPLINES AND HOTLINES

Iowa's Drug and Alcohol Help Line	1-866-242-4111
Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center	1-800-222-1222
Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline	1-800-284-7821
LGBT National Hotline	1-888-843-4564
Iowa Department of Human Services	1-800-362-2178
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	988

ACTIVITIES AT DMS

Students may choose to participate in any of the following activities:

Grade 5: Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Reading Games, Math Counts

Grade 6: Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Jazz Band, Reading Games, Musical, Math Counts

Grade 7: Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Jazz Band, School Play, Volleyball, Basketball, Track and Field, Football, Cross Country, Wrestling, Cheerleading, Mock Trial, Math Counts

Grade 8: Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Jazz Band, School Play, Volleyball, Basketball, Track and Field, Football, Cross Country, Wrestling, Cheerleading, Mock Trial, Math Counts, District NHD

Students who wish to quit band, orchestra, or chorus may do so **only in the windows from August 24th – September 4th and from January 15th – January 29th, 2027.** The student must have the instructor's approval and consent from the parent/guardian.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS (*Board Policy 605.08; Administrative Regulation 605.08R1*):

The Decorah Community School District authorizes the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools solely for instructional purposes under the direct supervision and explicit approval of licensed teaching staff.

AI tools may supplement learning but shall not substitute for a student's independent analysis, original composition, or mastery of course content.

Students are strictly prohibited from entering personally identifiable or confidential information into AI systems, consistent with federal and state privacy protections. Students shall verify the accuracy of any AI-generated material and must appropriately cite all sources, including AI, in accordance with copyright law and district citation standards.

Unauthorized or improper use of AI tools, including but not limited to: submitting AI-generated work as wholly one's own, failure to properly cite the use of AI resources, misrepresenting authorship, creating or disseminating harmful or inappropriate content, or using AI to bypass assigned work, constitutes a violation of Board Policy 605.08 and the District's Academic Integrity expectations. Such violations may result in the loss of credit, the need to redo the work, and additional consequences.

ATTENDANCE (*DCSD Board Policy Code No. 501*)

Regular school attendance is critical for academic success. At Decorah Middle School, we are committed to supporting students and families in maintaining consistent attendance. Our policies align with Iowa Department of Education guidelines, including expectations around chronic absenteeism.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM DEFINED

Under Iowa law, a student is considered **chronically absent** if they miss **10% or more of the trimester** for any reason—**excused or unexcused**. As an example, Trimester 1 is 51 days, this means **5.5 or more days of absence** may trigger chronic absenteeism concerns.

Chronic absenteeism is a key indicator monitored by schools, the state, and federal accountability systems. It reflects time missed from learning, regardless of the reason.

TO REPORT AN ABSENCE

A parent or guardian should contact Decorah Middle School by 9:00 AM the day of an absence. Either call– (563) 382-8427 or email paula.mcintyre@decorah.school

Students should check Canvas for assignments prior to requesting it from the office. An attempt will be made to call either a parent/guardian for any student reported absent without an excused absence.

TYPES OF ABSENCES (EXEMPT AND UNEXEMPT)

Exempt Absences

These are **documented and school-approved absences** that **do not count** toward chronic absenteeism calculations. Exempt absences include:

- School-sponsored activities that students participate (e.g., field trips, athletic competitions)
- Religious holidays
- Court appearances (with documentation)
- Required medical treatment for chronic or long-term illness (with medical documentation - doctor, dental, ortho, therapist, etc.)
- Funerals
- Weddings

Note: Documentation must be provided for medical reasons for the absence to be considered exempt. (Please ask for a note when you see a provider, and bring it to the office when you return to school).

Non-Exempt Absences

These absences **do count** toward chronic absenteeism totals, even if they are excused by a parent or guardian. Examples include:

- Illness (without medical documentation)
- Family vacations during school time
- Transportation issues
- Personal or family appointments not cleared in advance
- Oversleeping or missing the bus
- Truancy/unexcused absences

MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND INTERVENTION

Attendance is monitored regularly. The following steps may occur if a student nears or exceeds the chronic absenteeism threshold:

1. **10% - Notification Letter:** Sent to parents/guardians after 10% absence (non-exempt).
2. **15% - Student Engagement Meeting/Attendance Plan:** May or may not be required based on student's academic performance
Student Attendance Review: Meeting with school staff to identify barriers and create an improvement plan

Tiered support: Intervention strategies may include attendance contracts, check-ins, or counseling.

3. **20% - Referral:** In cases of persistent absenteeism, a referral may be made to the county attorney's office or juvenile court in accordance with Iowa Code.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- Report all absences to the school **on the day of the absence**.
- Provide documentation from appointments .
- Avoid scheduling vacations during instructional days.
- Communicate proactively with the school about attendance concerns.

MAKE-UP WORK FOR ABSENCES (Both Exempt and Non-Exempt)

The school district understands that students will occasionally miss class to attend family functions, school events/trips, or other events not sponsored by the school district. Teachers will make reasonable efforts to provide previously prepared work to students before they leave on an extended or planned absence. Teachers will not be required to provide missed work ahead of time if it is not reasonable to do so or if it has not yet been prepared. Upon return to the classroom, students will be expected to be up-to-date on assignments provided to them ahead of time, unless other arrangements were made prior to the student's absence. If the student was not provided with the classwork before leaving for an extended or planned absence, teachers will work with the student regarding missing assignments. Students will be expected to complete this work within a week of returning to school.

For short-term excused absences, students will have the equivalent time to complete missing work compared to the number of days absent. For example, if a student was absent two days due to flu, then he/she will have two days to complete the work from being absent from school.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES/TRUANCY

Failure to notify the school of absence results in unexcused absence/truant (will be marked "AU" in PowerSchool).

Examples:

- Leaving the school building or grounds without first obtaining permission from the office
- Failure to report to a class, assigned to a study hall, or other areas without permission from the office, faculty member, or nurse
- Leaving any assigned area without permission of the person in charge.

First Offense: A student found truant will be issued detention double the amount of time truant. To receive credit, all work missed will be made up to the satisfaction of the involved teacher.

Second and Subsequent Offenses: A meeting may be scheduled with the parents(s)/guardian(s) and student(s), counselor, Student Support, and administrator to discuss how to remedy truancy. Consequences may result in an in-school suspension. The Winneshiek County Attorney will be contacted for multiple truancy violations.

FINAL NOTE ON ATTENDANCE

Our goal is not to punish absences, but to partner with families to support student success. Every day counts! If you have questions about attendance procedures or need support, please contact the school office at 563-382-8427

BOOK BAGS AND LOCKERS (DCSD Board Policy Code No. 502.5 Lockers):

Students may use a book bag to carry books back and forth from home to school. Book bags will not be allowed in classrooms without the principal's permission. Students will have adequate time to go to their lockers to get whatever materials needed. Lockers measure 15" x 15" x 60", and book bags must fit in the locker. Students may not decorate the outside of any locker, unless approved by the principal. (School activity membership signs are permissible). Students may hang items inside of their locker, and items must be hung with magnets only—tape, stickers, writing inside the locker door, etc., are not allowed.

Students are notified and reminded that the locker assigned to them may be used to store coats, cold lunches, books, notebooks, and papers pertaining to school only. Perishables must not be left in lockers overnight. Students may choose to keep personal items such as money and/or electronic devices in the office for safekeeping. Locks will not be allowed on lockers. School authorities reserve the right to inspect lockers for cleanliness and unauthorized contents at any time in accordance with a Supreme Court ruling (New Jersey v T.L.O.) on January 16, 1985. No sharing of lockers. Students should use only the locker they are assigned.

CELL PHONES

Students will keep their communication/electronic devices turned off and in their lockers during the school day unless permission has been obtained in advance from the appropriate teacher, coach, or principal. The school will not be responsible for any lost or damaged personal devices. Cell phones, watches, and other communication devices that are disruptive to the learning environment or are used inappropriately will be confiscated and sent to the office. The following penalties will occur: **1st offense-** student can pick-up at the end of the day; **2nd offense-** parent must pick-up device from office; **3rd offense-** student will turn in device to office each morning for an indefinite amount of time. If a parent needs to contact their child, please call the office and the message will be relayed. Students wishing to use their devices to call/message parents will bring them to the office to do so. No phones or other electronic devices shall be used in restrooms or locker rooms.

COMMON AREA AND BUS BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Assemblies

- Students will sit and listen in an appropriate manner.
- Students will use appropriate responses to show their appreciation of the speaker/performance.
- Students will enter and exit the assembly area in a quiet manner.

Bus

- Sit in designated area and remain seated while the bus is moving.
- Follow the bus driver's directions.
- Share bus seats.
- Keep the bus clean.
- Enter and exit the bus in an orderly fashion.

- The in-town shuttle bus is for grades K – 8 only. Any child with special transportation needs should contact the building principal.
- Bus drivers will not allow any student on a different bus without a bus pass.

High School Football Games

- Middle school students need to sit in the designated “middle school” section on the west end of the home bleachers unless they are sitting with their parents.
- Middle school students are expected to be in the stands watching the game.
- Students are not allowed to bring in bags or backpacks to the stadium.
- Students should not be on the dike, east end of the stadium, behind the stadium, on the baseball field or in the parking lot without an adult.
- Students are expected to return to their stands after making a purchase at the concession stand.
- Students are expected to return to the stands after using the restroom.
- No abusive or unruly behavior will be allowed.
- No throwing of objects or any projectile in the bleachers or any area around Viking Stadium.
- No use of any prohibited items per policy of the IHSAA and IGHS AU (artificial noisemakers, unauthorized signs, etc.)
- All student behavior at home activities is expected to be school appropriate. Any student whose actions are considered inappropriate by school staff will be asked to sit with their parents or removed from the game. If asked to leave, students may not be allowed to return to other contests and admission to the event will not be refunded.

Other High School Games/Contests

- Middle School students are expected to be in the stands watching the game.
- Students are expected to return to their stands after making a purchase at the concession stand/using the restroom
- No abusive or unruly behavior will be allowed
- No use of any prohibited items per policy of the IHSAA and IGHS AU (artificial noisemakers, unauthorized signs, etc.)
- All student behavior at home activities is expected to be school appropriate. Any student whose actions are considered inappropriate by school staff will be asked to sit with their parents or removed from the game. If asked to leave, students may not be allowed to return to other contests and admission to the event will not be refunded.

Hallways

- Students will walk on the right side of the stairs.
- Students will use the shortest route to their destination.
- Students will not loiter or congregate in restrooms, hallways, or by lockers.
- Students will use their planner to check out from one location to another.
- Electronic devices are not to be utilized while transitioning between class periods.

Office

- Students will be in the office or nurse’s office only with permission from an instructor.
- Students will return to the classroom if the office personnel are not there.
- Permission is needed to use the office phone.

Playground Rules

Swings

- One person on a swing (students may not use the red swing unless given approval from a staff member)
- Stay seated; chains stay straight – do not alter chains
- Others need to stay clear of swing area

Hang Around

- One person per hanger
- Do not grab or pull on anyone hanging from bar

Play Structure

- Games of tag must have safe movement
- Slide: Go down only – feet first
- No jumping off slides
- Do not run up or down the slides
- Go one direction on monkey bars – do not grab or pull anyone hanging from bars

Spider Web

- Use hands and feet on climber (4 points of contact)
- Check around before jumping down

Recess Rules

- Recess should be a time for fun and relaxation; games should not become too competitive.
- Only safe games (activities where physical injury is unlikely) are allowed on the playground.
- Gymnastics only on the area with the foam pad.
- Students may only play in areas that are visible to the recess supervisors.
- Games will be played in designated areas.
- Students must get permission from the duty teacher to see the nurse or go into the building for any reason.
- Students will show respect to fellow students and staff and report bullying, illegal, violent, abusive, or threatening behaviors to the supervisor.
- No profanity.
- Students will dress responsibly for the weather.
- Students will line up quickly and orderly when recess is over and enter the building in the same manner.
- All recess supplies have to be returned efficiently when recess is over.
- **Gaga ball pit use:** include everyone, when in doubt – be out, do not sit or stand on the walls, be mindful when younger kids are playing

Winter Recess Rules

- Coats, gloves, and hats (something on your head) are strongly recommended.
- Snowball throwing is not permitted.
- When temperature is an issue, the principal will make the decision to stay inside or go outside.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined as *passing off someone else's work as your own*. Plagiarism is a violation at DMS. Give credit to all sources used, whether quoted or summarized. This includes all forms of media on the Internet, such as graphics, movies, music, and text. Understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it is something students will continue to learn about during their middle school years. Copying anything from a book, speech, magazine, article, the Internet, etc., and taking credit as your own work, even with some words changed, is still plagiarism. You must use quotation marks or paraphrase, and then remember to always cite your sources to credit the author(s).

Consequences for plagiarism depend on the situation and can include a call home to parents and the need for the assignment/assessment to be redone. Students are not to complete assignments that have been issued to other students and could face consequences along with the other student. (For policy pertaining to artificial intelligence (AI), please see heading *Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools*)

DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements will be read or viewed during Period 2, posted on bulletin boards, and/or available to read on TVs in classrooms, cafeteria, and/or commons. Daily announcements are also posted on PowerSchool and on the middle school page of the district website.

DECORAH DEFENDERS

Decorah Defenders is a student leadership group at the middle school, similar to a student council, made up of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Students are nominated and selected by their peers and teachers at the end of their 5th grade year to serve in this leadership role. Throughout the school year, Defenders will meet with Mr. Kuempel and Mr. Stock to help plan and lead monthly assemblies, address school issues and concerns, and assist with a variety of activities and events at the middle school.

DEFACING PUBLIC PROPERTY (Iowa Code 716.1):

If any person willfully writes, makes marks or draws characters or caricatures on the walls of any church, college, academy, schoolhouse, courthouse or other public buildings or any furniture, apparatus, or fixtures therein, or willfully injure or deface the same, or any wall or fence enclosing the same, he/she shall be fined not exceeding one hundred (\$100.00) dollars or imprisoned in the county jail not more than thirty (30) days.

DELIVERIES

Balloons or flowers should not be sent to students at school. Please arrange for birthday greetings and other special mementoes to be delivered at home.

DRESS CODE

The staff at Decorah Middle School will interpret the dress code in the best interest of the entire student body. Students will be required to change if dressed inappropriately. Good judgment on the part of students and parents should be the primary guide for proper dress at school. The administration reserves the right to make decisions on what is proper and what is not. Faculty members are permitted to specify a dress code for field trips and/or mini courses. Students are expected to dress and groom themselves neatly in clothes that are suitable for school activities. Any clothing item that is deemed distracting to the learning environment is prohibited. The following items of clothing are considered inappropriate:

- Clothing/accessories with inappropriate expressions, including drugs, tobacco, and alcohol-related products.
- Clothing should reflect modest necklines, hemlines, and fit, (length of shorts/skirts, length of sleeves, etc.). Staff will use discretion taking into account differing student heights and different trends.
- Undergarments (i.e. bra straps, boxer shorts) are to be covered. Tube tops, halter-tops, and backless tops are not permitted. Excessive display of midsection is not permitted. Jeans, shorts, and pants that reveal the student's undergarments/ backsides are not permitted.
- Shoes or sandals must be worn at all times. Flip flops are discouraged.
- Headgear such as hats/caps/hoods will not be worn in the building during the school day. Hats and caps must be removed as students enter the building and may be worn as they exit the building.
- Students may not wear or carry flags/capes of any kind
- Any accessories deemed unsafe (such as tools/chains/spiked jewelry) are not permitted.
- Sunglasses cannot be worn in school unless prescribed by a doctor.

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS (*DCSD Board Policy Code No. 506.1 Student Records*):

Student records containing personally identifiable information, except for directory information, are confidential. Only persons, including employees, who have a legitimate educational interest, are allowed to access a student's records without the parent's permission. Parents may access, request amendments to and copy their child's records during regular office hours. Parents may also file a complaint with the United States Department of Education if they feel their rights regarding their child's records have been violated. For a complete copy of the school district's policy on student records or the procedure for filing a complaint, contact the board secretary, in the central administration office, 563-382-4208. Student directory information is released without parental permission unless the parent asks the school district not to release it. Parents must notify the school district at the beginning of the school year if they do not want the school district to release directory information. Directory information includes name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, degrees and awards received, most recent educational institution attended, year in school, dates of attendance, and heights and weights of athletes.

ELECTRONIC/TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES

Computer Usage (*DCSD Board Policy Code No. 605.6 Internet and Computer Usage*): Decorah Middle School students will be assigned a computer (MacBook Air). The school district requires that each student along with their parent(s)/guardian(s) sign an *Acceptable Use Policy* (*DCSD Board Policy Code No. 605.6*) and *DMS Digital Learning Environment Program Expectations Handout* prior to the start of each school year via e-registration. Use of the computer system and the Internet shall be consistent with school district policies and the mission of the school district. Students using computers for inappropriate reasons will forgo computer privileges for a determined amount of time.

The student and parent/guardian will be responsible to pay for the cost to repair the device not to exceed the actual cash value at the time of damage or loss. The devices are insured, and the deductible is \$250, so in the event of accidental damage, \$250 is the amount paid if the cost of repair exceeds that.

Accessory Fees:

Computer Bag—\$20.00

Bag Strap—\$3.25

Power Cord—\$79.00

Name Tag—\$5.00

All personal electronic/technological devices including cell phones, iPads, tablets, must be shut off during the school day. Electronic/technological devices may not be used on field trips unless specifically stated by the teachers. If cell phone use is necessary for a health-related issue, parents/guardians may obtain this permission for a student at the principal's office. If any student is found text messaging or using his/her electronic/technological device during the day without permission, the device will be brought to the office and a consequence will be issued (see section on Cell Phones). During emergencies, absolutely NO TEXT MESSAGING is allowed. If electronic/technological devices are being used to discover the extent of the emergency, then emergency personnel may not be able to use the phone lines.

Electronic/technological devices may be used in the classroom with teacher permission. Electronic/technological devices are not permitted at recess or transitioning between classes.

Unacceptable uses of any technological device at school/school functions includes but is not limited to the following:

- Using the device during class without the teacher's permission,
- Taking pictures or video in the locker room and/or restroom,
- Taking or distributing any picture or video of another person that results in ridiculing, demeaning, bullying, or harassing the other person,
- Taking or recording video/pictures of a student(s) and/or staff member without their permission,
- Cheating, and/or
- Harassing another person.
- Headphones are not to be worn unless given permission by the teacher.

Any electronic device including cell phones, watches, and computers, with cameras capable of storing and/or transmitting and/or receiving images are banned from use for any purpose in locker rooms and restrooms at ALL times. Students may be disciplined for any use of handheld technology devices in school locker rooms or restrooms. At no time are students or visitors authorized to video, capture, photograph, or audio record others in the school building, on school property (to include school vehicles), or at school activities (unless recording a public performance, such as a game, honor assembly, concert, contest, etc.), without the consent of a teacher, coach, or school administrator.

Inappropriate use of a device or a prohibited item will be taken away from the student and returned at a later date. Students found in violation of this policy may be subject to discipline and, in cases where a law may be violated, law enforcement may be contacted. Multiple and/or repeated violations may result in limited Internet access. Students need to remember that whatever they put on a personal electronic device could end up anywhere, so they need to ensure the devices are used appropriately, legally, and ethically.

Laser pointers are not allowed at school/school functions. Students using laser pointers may earn a consequence, and the laser pointer will be confiscated.

Student Responsibilities

- a. **Do not delete 'history'.**
- b. Use the computer and accessories in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner.
- c. Computers must be brought to school each day, fully charged. While a limited number of loaner computers are available in the library should a student forget their device, a third checkout will generate an email home and to the grade level team. Students repeatedly needing to charge computers during the day may face consequences.
- d. During athletic events or after school events, computers will be stored in a secure location provided by the school.
- e. Use the computer for educational purposes only. Students may not play games on their computer at school during school hours.
- f. Obey school rules concerning behavior and appropriate language.
- g. Comply with all copyright laws.
- h. Report any security problems.
- i. Be the only user of the computer. Loss or damage that occurs when anyone else uses your computer will be the full responsibility of the student and/or family. Do not touch the computers or chargers of other students.
- j. Secure computer when not in use.
- k. Report inappropriate digital content immediately to an adult.
- l. Do not alter anything in 'settings'.
- m. Do not deface your computer with stickers, markers, etc.
- n. Do not reveal your password to another user.
- o. Only use the computer's recording capabilities for educational purposes, with consent of the participants and their knowledge of the intended use, and with the staff approval.
- p. Review this handout and all policies with parent/guardian and comply with these provisions.

Activities Strictly Prohibited

- a. Illegal installation or transmission of copyrighted materials.
- b. Any action that violates existing DCSD board policy or applicable law.
- c. Creating, sending, accessing, uploading, downloading, or distributing profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit materials.
- d. Changing computer settings (exceptions include personal settings such as font size, brightness, etc.).
- e. Downloading software/apps.
- f. Spamming and/or sending mass or inappropriate emails.
- g. Gaining access to other students' accounts, files, and/or data.
- h. Using the school's Internet/e-mail accounts for financial or commercial gain or for any illegal activity.
- i. Using anonymous and/or false communications.
- j. Providing personal information over the Internet should only occur with the permission of your teacher/parent/guardian.
- k. Vandalizing (any malicious attempt to harm or destroy hardware, software or data, including, but not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses or computer programs that can infiltrate computer systems and/or damage software components) of school equipment.
- l. Transmitting, accessing, or creating materials that are obscene, threatening or otherwise intended to harass, demean, or bully recipients.
- m. Bypassing Decorah Community School District's web filter or security measures.

Consequences

The use of the Decorah Community School District's technology resources is a privilege, not a right. The privilege of using the technology resources provided by the Decorah Community School District is not transferable or extendible by students to people or groups outside the district and terminates when a student is no longer enrolled in the Decorah Community School District. The Program Expectations is provided to make all users aware of the responsibilities associated with efficient, ethical, and lawful use of technology resources. If a person violates any of the terms and conditions named in the Program Expectations or the Acceptable Use Policy or other pertinent District Policies or applicable laws, privileges may be terminated, access to the school district technology resources may be denied, and the appropriate disciplinary action may be applied. *Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension/ expulsion for students. When applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.* The student shall use reasonable care to ensure that the device and accessories are not lost or damaged. In the event of loss of or damage to the device, including accessories, the student and parent/guardian may be fined for the actual cost of replacement or repair of the device. Possible consequences for computer misuse include but are not limited to: teacher confiscation for the period/rest of the day, curfew restriction, loss of take-home privileges, loss of sign-in privileges, etc.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

There will be state authorized drills throughout the school year.

Evacuation Drill Procedures (fire)—Stay with your teacher. The signal will be an intermittent sound and lights will flash in the hall and classrooms. Walk rapidly (do not run) and do not stop for any personal belongings or supplies of any kind. It is of the utmost importance that you follow your teacher's directions carefully. Consider every evacuation alarm as being a real emergency. There is no way of indicating the difference between a drill and the real thing. At the sound of the alarm, pass from the room immediately to the correct exit in your designated area. Wait quietly outside until you are told by your teacher to return to your class.

Shelter (tornado)—All students will follow the shelter drill directions to the lower hall or designated area; the signal will be a verbal direction. If the emergency is a tornado, all occupants of the building will go to the lower hall. All will sit down against the wall, draw up knees, and cover the back of head with their hands. No one is to leave the building. Wait quietly until you are told by your teacher to return to your class.

Lockdown—Run—Hide—Fight: When a threat is inside the building: *Run* – attempt to safely evacuate. If this is not possible, *Hide*: lock and/or barricade the door, stay out of sight and remain silent (silence electronics), do not answer the door for anyone. *Fight* – Prepare to defend! In lockdown situations, refrain from using electronic devices.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

- All Decorah Middle School students must have the opportunity to learn and be respected. If at any time, any student is not following classroom expectations and/or interrupts the learning of others or disrupts the teacher's ability to teach, he/she will be told to go to the office. Any student, who is asked to leave the classroom because expectations were not being followed, will have an automatic one-hour detention that same day after school (unless other arrangements are made with the teacher).
- Substitute teachers play a critical role in maintaining a positive learning environment. If middle school students are disrespectful towards a substitute teacher, that may result in a 60-minute detention after school

- Students are expected to show at all times, respect for themselves, authority, fellow students, school property, and the property of others. School expectations apply at all school functions including athletic games, music concerts, field trips, and competitions.
- Students will not bully others. A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students. Bullying implies an imbalance of power or strength. The student who is bullied has difficulty defending him/herself (refer to the last page of the student planner for more information).
- At no time will threatening statements be tolerated, i.e. *I'm going to kill you.*
- Inappropriate language or expression, in any form, is not acceptable. The use of the "F Bomb" or derogatory terms may result in discipline (including in-school suspension); additional educational opportunities may occur to address any of these behaviors.
- Students are expected to show school spirit by supporting school activities and demonstrating positive sportsmanship whether winning or losing.
- Skateboards, roller blades, and/or scooters must not be used on school grounds and must be stored in the office during school hours. Bikes may not be ridden on school grounds.
- Running in the hallway is not allowed.
- Food and drink (except water), will not be brought into the classroom without permission from staff. This would include flavored drink packets as well. Staff has discretion to withhold food/drink items in their room until the end of the day.
- Any food shared with an entire class/prime time must be *store bought*.
- Students are expected to follow all federal, state, and local laws and the rules, regulations, and directives of the district. Students are expected to refrain from possessing, using, or distributing tobacco products, beer, wine, alcoholic beverages, controlled substances not validly prescribed, and substances which are look-alikes for such products. (Board Policy 503.1 Student Conduct)
- If students are removed to the hall and/or sent to the office, a gold behavior reflection sheet may be filled out in an effort to reinforce our learner behaviors: *responsible, respectful* and *engaged*.
- Teachers will refer to the DMS discipline matrix for minor and major offenses. Three minor offenses = one major. Major offenses may also carry a good conduct violation with them. (Refer to "Code of Conduct" section towards the end of this handbook).
- If a student is suspended (out of school, or in school), that student cannot attend practice or a competition that afternoon.

Study Hall

- Students will free-read during the first 10 minutes.
- Bring all study materials to study hall; come prepared to work.
- During the first 20 minutes of study hall, students will not be able to leave study hall or work with another student. *The only exception to this is if a student has a signed pass/planner from a teacher requesting he/she work with a group/partner or if a teacher takes students to their room to work.
- Work in pairs/groups only after receiving permission from the study hall supervisor or teacher.
- Electronic/technological device use is the prerogative of the study hall supervisor. This includes listening to music. Students may not share ear buds and/or headphones.
- No snacks in study hall without teacher permission
- Quiet study time continues until the end of the period.

Expectations at Decorah Middle School Events/Athletic Contests:

- Spectators are required to maintain a high degree of sportsmanship during athletic contests.
- Spectators must, at all times, remain in the designated seating areas while a contest is in progress.
- No spectator is allowed to confront an official, coach, or player before, during or after an athletic contest.
- The actions of a spectator, detrimental to the playing of the game, may cause forfeiture of that contest.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips may be taken as an extension of the classroom; students are expected to attend. While on field trips, students are guests and considered ambassadors of the school district. Students must treat employees, chaperones, and guides with respect and courtesy. Taking electronic devices on a field trip is the discretion of the teachers.

FOOD SERVICE

The DCSD Food Service uses a computerized hot lunch accounting system. School Dining Systems utilizes a permanent lunch ticket with an individual bar code number for each student. Lost/damaged tickets will be replaced for a fee of \$5.00. You may not use your sibling's card, however you can use one from a previous school year; meals are tracked by student and building. Lunch accounts are grouped as family accounts. Parents can send one check that will provide lunch money for all their children for all schools. DMS students can purchase food a' la carte, and their lunch account will be charged accordingly. Milk purchased with cold lunches is considered a' la carte. A' la carte is available only if students have their lunch card, and money is in their account. A' la carte is anything selected that does not constitute a meal under the federal guidelines [meal consists of 3 components: fruit, vegetable, milk or protein] such as choosing two of the meal options. Parents may block a' la carte or assign a spending limit. At registration, parents may make a deposit for your child and notify the nurse if your child has any food allergies. If food accommodations need to be made, a note from a physician must be obtained stating the child's condition or allergy. The nurse will keep this on file. Payments for meals should be made in the office. A' la carte items can only be purchased before school and during a student's assigned lunchtime.

Cafeteria Rules

- Demonstrate good manners, common courtesy, and appropriate behavior.
- Remain seated and visit with students at the same table where you are seated. Include everyone at the table.
- Computers should not be used during breakfast and lunch times. Computers should not be around food/liquid.
- Assist in keeping our cafeteria clean. Return trays and silverware.
- Students who eat breakfast will remain in the cafeteria until school begins. All students are responsible for their lunch tickets. Lunch tickets must be whole, not cut down to just the barcode. If you come to lunch without your whole ticket, you will be asked to go to the back of the line.
- All breakfast and lunch food must be eaten in the cafeteria. Food may be purchased (a' la carte) and saved for after school if there is money in the account or if the student has the correct change; these should remain unopened when stored in locker.
- Students bringing cold lunches to school are urged to write their name on all containers.
- Soda is not an acceptable beverage for school and/or lunch/breakfast.

- Food may not be ordered and/or delivered from restaurants and brought to school for breakfast or lunch.
- Treats (birthday or celebrations) may not be brought to school to distribute during lunch/recess.
- Check with parents/guardians before buying a la carte for your friends.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

The guidance and counseling program at DMS has been developed to serve students in many ways. A counseling service is present to enable students to discuss individually and confidentially any situation that might help them adjust to the work and activities of the school. The guidance office is located on the first floor, room 110.

HARASSMENT *(DCSD Board Policy Code No. 503.4 Student Harassment):*

Harassment of employees and students will not be tolerated in the school district. School district includes school district facilities, school district premises, and non-school property if the employee or student is at any school-sponsored, school-approved or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events where students are under the control of the school district or where the employee is engaged in school business.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, race, color, creed, sex, religion, marital status, ethnic background, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic background. Harassment by board members, administrators, employees, parents, students, vendors, and others doing business with the school district is prohibited. Employees whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to the investigation procedure, which may result in discipline, up to, and including, discharge or other appropriate action. Other individuals whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate sanctions as determined and imposed by the superintendent or board.

Harassment and bullying mean any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

"Electronic" means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, electronic text messaging, or similar technologies.

Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances:

- Verbal, nonverbal, physical or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;

- Repeated remarks of demeaning nature that have the effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, property, etc. that have the effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Transmitting, accessing, or creating materials that are obscene, threatening or otherwise intended to harass, demean, or bully recipients;
- Demeaning jokes, stories, rumors, or activities directed at the student that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Unreasonable interference with a student's performance or creation of an intimidating, offensive, or hostile learning environment;
- Creating, sending, accessing, uploading, downloading, or distributing profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit materials;
- Sexting: sending (someone) sexually explicit photographs or messages via mobile phone.

Sexual harassment shall include, but not be limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the student's educational opportunities or benefits; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a student is used as the basis for educational decisions affecting that student; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a student's education by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

Other types of harassment may include, but not be limited to stories, pictures or objects that are offensive, tend to alarm, annoy, abuse or demean certain protected individuals and groups. Employees and students who believe they have suffered harassment shall report such matters to the building principal, who shall be the investigator for harassment complaints. However, claims regarding harassment may also be reported to the superintendent who shall be the alternate investigator for harassment complaints.

Upon receiving a complaint, the investigator shall confer with the complainant to obtain an understanding and a statement of the facts. It shall be the responsibility of the investigator to promptly and reasonably investigate claims of harassment and to pass the findings on to the superintendent who shall complete such further investigation as deemed necessary and take such final action as deemed appropriate. Information regarding an investigation of harassment shall be confidential to the extent possible, and those individuals who are involved in the investigation shall not discuss information regarding the complaint outside the investigation process.

No one shall retaliate against an employee or student because they have filed a harassment/bullying complaint, assisted or participated in a harassment/bullying investigation, proceeding, or hearing regarding a harassment/bullying charge or because they have opposed language or conduct that violates this policy. It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent and investigator to inform and educate employees or students and others involved with the school district about harassment and the school district's policy prohibiting harassment.

If you see something, say something. Inappropriate behavior/harassment/bullying can be reported the following ways:

- Call Decorah Middle School—563-382-8427
- Tell any DMS staff member

- Tell a parent
- Use the *Safe School Reporting Form* <https://forms.gle/EcTZtDo7RV7eJhtW7>

HEALTH SERVICES

Decorah Health Services follows procedures to respond to student illness, injury, and communicable diseases in accordance with state guidelines.

Medical Emergency Information

Parents/guardians must complete and update emergency and medical information each year, including allergies, medications, physician and hospital information, and emergency contacts.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

Parents/guardians must notify the school nurse or office of any illnesses, injuries, medications, activity restrictions, communicable diseases, treatments, or changes to emergency contact or medical information.

Reporting Illness or Injury

Students who become ill or injured during the school day or at a school-sponsored activity must report it to a staff member immediately. School personnel will provide first aid until a parent/guardian or medical professional assumes care. Parents/guardians will be notified as needed.

Illness Guidelines

Students may be sent home if they have:

- A fever of 100°F or higher (must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning)
- Vomiting or diarrhea (must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning)
- Severe cold symptoms or persistent cough
- Unexplained rash or eye redness/discharge
- A diagnosed communicable disease
- Students may return with physician clearance or when symptoms have resolved, as appropriate.

Communicable Disease Protocol

Students with a communicable or contagious illness may return to school when they no longer pose a health risk to others and meet current Iowa Department of Health guidelines. Students with compromised immune systems may receive accommodations based on physician recommendations and consultation with parents and school staff.

Commitment to Health and Safety

Families and staff share responsibility for maintaining a safe school environment by reporting illnesses and injuries, keeping medical information current, and following health protocols.

Medication Administration

Medication may be administered at school only with parent/guardian authorization and in accordance with school policy.

- Written permission from a parent/guardian is required before prescription or nonprescription medication can be administered at school. Authorization may be

submitted on a [Permission for medication form](#) or through the district's approved electronic registration system, including PowerSchool.

- Verbal permission from a parent/guardian will be accepted only in limited or emergency circumstances and must be documented by school personnel. Written authorization may still be required following verbal consent.
- Prescription medications must be provided in the original pharmacy-labeled container with current dosage instructions.
- Nonprescription medications must be provided in the original manufacturer's container.
- Additional healthcare provider authorization may be required for certain medications or circumstances, in accordance with state law and district procedures.
- It is the responsibility of the student to report to the office at the time the medication is to be taken. Students will be reminded if they forget to go to the office to take their medication.

Medication shall be administered only by authorized school personnel or by individuals otherwise permitted by law or district policy.

Emergency procedures are in place for medication-related reactions or complications. Unused, discontinued, or expired medication will be returned when possible or disposed of according to state and federal law.

Self-Administration of Medication

Students may self-administer medication only when authorized by the school in accordance with district policy and applicable law.

- Written authorization from a parent/guardian and, when required, a licensed healthcare provider must be submitted prior to a student carrying or self-administering medication at school or during school activities.
- Authorization may be completed through signed district forms or the district's approved electronic registration system, including PowerSchool.
- The student must demonstrate the ability to responsibly and safely self-administer the medication.
- Medication must be in the original labeled container as required by law and school procedures.
- The school may revoke self-administration privileges if the student fails to comply with school rules or if student safety is at risk.

Students may not share or possess unauthorized medication at school or school-sponsored activities. The district is not responsible for injuries from self-administration except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Physical Education—A doctor's excuse is required when a student is not able to participate in physical education class. Students will re-enter class on the date stated on the doctor's excuse. To enter class at an earlier or later date, a note from the doctor is needed. An excuse form can be obtained from the office. **A note from the doctor is required before a student resumes activity.**

Immunizations—All 7th grade students will be required by Iowa law to have a Tdap and Meningococcal vaccine done prior to the first day of school. Proof of date immunization is required. If it cannot be done by that time, please notify the school nurse.

HOMEWORK BELIEFS

Purposes of Homework:

- Practice of skills
- Preparation of upcoming content
- Elaboration of introduced content
- Development of study habits

Types of Homework:

- Practice (to reinforce skills)
- Preparation (to introduce future skills)
- Extension (to apply previously learned skills to different contexts)
- Personal Development (time management, self-confidence)
- Peer Interaction (build and develop team-working skills)
- Not all homework will be graded.

Expectations for Students:

- Be proud of the work you do!
- Complete assignments with quality and your best thinking!
- Write assignments in planners.
- Respectfully request help with homework when needed.
- Take home materials that are needed to complete your assignments.
- Be responsible for work missed when absent (worksheets, notes, etc.)
- Complete homework on time.

LEGAL STATUS OF STUDENT

If a student's legal status, such as the student's name and/or the student's custodial arrangement should change during the school year, the parent or guardian must notify the school district. The school district needs to know when these changes occur to ensure that the school district has an accurate and up to date student record.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER

The library will be open to any student needing to use materials or computers from 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM, but access can vary depending on scheduled classes. All materials leaving the library media center must be checked out and become the responsibility of the individual checking them out.

- Books will normally have a two-week circulation period with one renewal possible.
- Lost or damaged items should be reported to the library staff.
- Replacement costs will be assessed if books are lost or damaged beyond repair.

LOST AND FOUND

There are designated areas in the middle school for lost and found items. Please check promptly at the office if you are missing something; unclaimed items will be removed periodically. Students are responsible for their own personal and school items. When a personal belonging appears to be missing or stolen, school officials will attempt to assist the student in the recovery.

If money, purses, wallets, and other valuable items are found, please bring them to the office. Students are urged to make a prompt inquiry concerning such items. The best advice for students is to always take the time to secure personal belongings in a locker and/or write your name on all belongings.

MESSAGES

Messages may be left at the office and will be delivered to students either at lunch or during 8th period. Students should not be sending or receiving text messages during the day via phone, smartwatch, or other electronic device. If you need to get a message to your child, please call the office at 563-382-8427

MORNING ENTRANCE—*Bell rings at 7:53 School begins at 8:00*

- Any student may enter the southeast door (under the canopy) if he/she needs to go to the office, see a teacher before first period, eat breakfast, and/or bring an instrument to the band/orchestra room(s). Students who eat breakfast are required to stay in the cafeteria until school begins.
- 5th and 7th graders will enter through Door 5; 6th and 8th graders will enter via the main entrance. Students may enter the building from the northwest (bridge) door and then walk to the front of the building.
- If a student wants to seek assistance from a teacher, he/she must report to the office first and get a pass before going to the teacher's classroom. Teachers are available from 7:45 to 7:55 A.M.
- The locker rooms open at 7:53 A.M.

9th HOUR

The purpose of homework is to practice, review, and/or apply knowledge. To be best prepared for any class, students need to come ready to learn, which means assignments are completed on time. The purpose of 9th Hour is for students to learn good study habits, finish late homework, and/or use the time to work on the next day's homework.

Procedures:

- If a student is missing an assignment, he/she will attend 9th Hour one of the following times:

*The same day from 3:10 to 3:40 in the Collaboration Room,
*The next morning 7:25 to 7:55 in the middle school office,
*The next day from 3:10 to 3:40 in the Collaboration Room.

Failure to complete your assigned time will result in a meeting with Student Support.

- 9th Hour will be served in Collaboration Room
- If a student is serving a 9th Hour with another teacher, that teacher should communicate this to the 9th Hour supervising staff member.
- 9th Hour will start for all students on Tuesday, September 2nd.
- 9th Hour is not the same thing as a detention and cannot double as a detention.
- The student is responsible for communicating his/her assigned 9th Hour to his/her parents/guardian via email or phone call from the office.
- 9th Hour is scheduled Monday – Thursday, and occasionally on Friday
- Students who have multiple late assignments in one trimester will meet with Student Support/Principal to develop a plan for success (and could be assigned to working lunch).

- DMS Activities Director will make every attempt to notify coaches if an athlete is late to practice because of 9th Hour.
- Students may be late to an athletic/musical practice to complete their 9th Hour assigned time.
- In very special circumstances, 9th Hour can be served during lunchtime with permission from the principal.
- Situations arise that are out of your control, and homework may not get done on time. This is the purpose of *free passes*. Those are located on the first page in your planner.
- Students will have a certain number of free passes each trimester. This will be determined by grade level teams in the fall. Free passes may not be saved or used at the student's discretion.
- Free passes apply to daily work or retakes—not tests on that day.
- When a student uses a free pass that means he/she does not have to stay for 9th Hour. He/she will still have to do the work. A free pass is not a pass from the work.
- Students are responsible to keep their *9TH HOUR FREE PASS* in their planner. If students have misplaced their *9TH HOUR FREE PASSES*, they will not receive new ones. If a student is issued a new planner, *9TH HOUR FREE PASSES* will be updated to reflect the trimester.

9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 1 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 1 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 1 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____
9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 2 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 2 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 2 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____
9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 3 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 3 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____	9TH HOUR FREE PASS Trimester 3 Name _____ Date Used _____ Teacher Initials _____ Subject _____

OFFICE HOURS

Office personnel are available in the school office from 7:30 to 4:00 each day.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All students are required to dress for physical education in appropriate gym clothes and shoes. Cut-off jean shorts and spandex bicycle shorts are not allowed. If there is any safety concern

related to clothing, the PE instructor shall have the discretion to require the student to change clothing to eliminate the safety concern. Shower facilities are available, and their use is encouraged. PE uniforms are not required. Clothing left in the locker room will be considered discarded and will be given to appropriate charities after a reasonable amount of time. Unless a doctor's note is provided, illness and injury do not excuse students from PE activities. Absolutely no cell phone use in the locker rooms. Students in grades 7th and 8th will have lockers and locks issued to them, 5th and 6th graders do not change.

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS

State law forbids school employees from using corporal punishment against any student. Certain actions by school employees are not considered corporal punishment. Additionally, school employees may use "reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain" to do certain things, such as prevent harm to persons or property. State law also places limits on school employees' abilities to restrain or confine and detain any student. The law limits why, how, where, and for how long a school employee may restrain or confine and detain a child. If a child is restrained or confined and detained, the school must maintain documentation and must provide certain types of notice to the child's parent. If you have any questions about this state law, please contact your school. The complete text of the law and additional information is available on the Iowa Department of Education's Website link <https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/student-supports/integrated-supports/protecting-student-safety>.

SCHOOL DAY

The Decorah Middle School day begins at **8:00 A.M.** and dismisses at 3:05 P.M. Supervision is not provided on school property prior to 7:45 A.M. If for any reason, students arrive late or must leave early from school, they must report to the office for a pass to admit them to class or grant permission to leave.

STANDARDS BASED EDUCATION

Standards-based education (SBE) refers to instructional and grading practices that are aligned to learning standards. Learning standards are written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do. State and national standards determine what is taught. Learning is measured based on student proficiency level of the standards. Because SBE requires frequent monitoring and feedback on student learning, teachers are better equipped to tailor instruction to student needs and students are more aware and reflective of the learning process.

How does Standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

- Student learning is measured by proficiency level rather than points.
- Students are provided time to practice concepts and make mistakes before any grading occurs. Homework is not graded.
- Students are offered multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.
- Academic achievement and learner behaviors are reported separately.

Reading the report card

Standards Based Performance Scale

4 = Exceeds

3 = Proficient

2 = Developing

1 = Beginning

If your student receives a 4:

Your student demonstrates an understanding of the concepts and skills taught in class that exceeds the grade level standard. This level may not be attainable on every assignment/assessment or on every standard and will vary from class to class

If your student receives a 3:

Your student independently demonstrates proficiency with concepts and skills taught in class and described by the grade-level standard.

If your student receives a 2:

Your student demonstrates a developing understanding of the standard but additional learning is needed to meet all learning targets for the standard.

If your student receives a 1:

Your student demonstrates a beginning understanding of the standard and requires additional instructional support.

Grading Practices

- A proficiency scale measures progress with standards
- Most standards are measured with a 3-point scale. A select number of standards are measured with a 4-point scale as described above.
- Proficiency is based on a body of student-produced evidence.
- Proficiency is organized and reported by standard.
- Achievement of behavior learning targets is reported separately as proficient or not-yet-proficient (NYP).

What are the advantages of Standards-based education?

- Students receive frequent feedback regarding their learning throughout instruction.
- Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency of standards.
- Teachers know which standards they need to re-teach.
- Students and parents know which standards require additional learning and/or practice.
- Grades more accurately communicate the level of student understanding.
- SBE helps to align instruction, assessments, and grading with standards.

What is the relearning experience?

When appropriate, teachers will allow students the opportunity to redo, refine, or reassess to demonstrate proficiency and show retention of the learning standards. To be afforded this opportunity, students must show new evidence of learning through a relearning experience. Requirements for reassessment may vary by teacher. Teachers will clearly communicate reassessment requirements and deadlines.

Why is homework not included in the final grade?

Homework offers opportunities to practice skills, to prepare students for upcoming learning, and to reinforce and extend learning, but not to learn material for the first time.

In addition, teachers only want to formally assess evidence they know is completed independently by the student. Therefore, homework is used for formative feedback only and will not be included in the final academic grade. Because practice is essential to the learning process, homework is not optional and should be completed on time.

What are learner behaviors?

Learner behaviors enable students to access learning and interact with others productively in the community and school setting. Learner behaviors are reported separately from academic standards and are assessed as P (proficient) or NYP (Not Yet Proficient). Eligibility for co-curricular activities will be determined based on learner behaviors.

DMS Learner Behaviors

Responsible

- Students at DMS are accountable for behaviors within their control.
- Come to class with required materials
- Complete independent work as assigned
- Advocate for their own needs and learning experience

Respectful

- Students at DMS are considerate of the needs of self and others.
- Listen and follow directions
- Communicate effectively with adults and peers
- Collaborate with a variety of peers

Engaged

- Students at DMS give their best attention to the task at hand.
- Participate in class in a variety of ways
- Show a willingness to learn
- Exhibit a positive attitude towards accepting feedback

RETAKES/RELEARNING GUIDELINES

DMS will allow retakes for students on assessments with the following guidelines:

- Before students complete a retake, they will need to relearn the material using the methods outlined by that specific teacher.
- Retakes are the primary responsibility of the student, with more guidance given in 5th grade than in 6th grade, etc.
- Students understand they will receive credit for the highest score attained when a retake is applied.

The timeline to complete a retake after the initial assessment is at the teacher's discretion. It's highly recommended that retakes are completed before the last week of the trimester.

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS

Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) will be given in March and MAP will be given in September and January. Specific content areas that are tested are subject to change. Scores and goals can be recorded in the table on the first page in your planner.

MAP TESTING	Fall Score 2026	Winter Score 2027	Did I show growth?	
Reading			Yes	No
Math			Yes	No

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES/STUDENT SEARCHES (502.6 Student Searches)

In order to protect the health and safety of students, employees and visitors to the school district and for the protection of the school district facilities, students and their belongings and school owned lockers and desks might be searched or inspected. A search of a student will be justified when there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating the law or school district policy, rules, or regulations affecting school order.

Considering factors such as the following may form reasonable suspicion:

- Eyewitness observations by employees,
- Information received from reliable sources,
- Suspicious behavior by the student and/or
- The student's past history and school record- although this factor alone is not sufficient to provide the basis for reasonable suspicion. A search will be permissible in its scope or intrusiveness when the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objectives of the search. Reasonableness of scope or intrusiveness may be determined based on factors such as the following:
 - The age of the student;
 - The sex of the student;
 - The nature of the infraction; and,
 - The emergency required the search without delay.

Decorah Community School District officials have authority to search student cell phones or other personal technology devices (e.g., laptops, smart watches, tablets, etc.), when school officials have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student technology contains photos, text, video, audio, or other information that is evidence of a student's violation of school rules or policy or a violation of state and/or federal law.

TARDY POLICY/PREPAREDNESS FOR CLASS

A student is prepared for class when he/she is in the classroom and has the correct materials, which includes a charged computer. If any of those provisions are not met, a tardy unexcused may be issued. The fourth tardy for each trimester will warrant a 30-minute detention as well as each subsequent tardy received within that trimester. Habitual unexcused tardiness may result in counseling, parent conference, and/or meeting with Student Support and/or further administrative action that may include in-school suspension. A student will be counted *tardy excused* by either the teacher/principal when the reason for being late to class could not be avoided. Excused tardies will not impact attendance records. A student will be counted *tardy unexcused* by either the teacher/principal when a student arrives late to class and/or does not have the correct classroom materials.

TELEPHONE

The telephone in the office is available to students with the permission of office personnel. A phone is also available in the Commons area that can be used after 4:00 p.m. Unauthorized long-distance calling (including 1-800 numbers) will result in disciplinary action.

VISITORS

Visitors are welcome at DMS. Visitors must first report to the DMS office. All guests are required to wear a visitor's badge. Student visitors are only allowed during lunch and recess and must be approved by the principal.

WEAPONS (DCSD Board Policy Code No. 502.6 Weapons)

The board believes that students and employees deserve to learn and work in a safe and healthy environment. Weapons and other dangerous objects in school district facilities cause material and substantial disruption to the school environment and present a threat to the health and safety of students, employees, and visitors on the school district premises or property.

A "dangerous weapon" is any device or instrument designed primarily for use in inflicting death or injury, and when used in its designed manner is capable of inflicting death. It is also any sort

of instrument or device which is actually used in such a way as to indicate the user intended to inflict death or serious injury, and when so used is capable of inflicting death. Dangerous weapons include, but are not limited to the following: any offensive weapon, pistol, revolver, or other firearm, dagger, razor, stiletto, switchblade knife, or other knife, BB guns, explosives (including fireworks). Students in possession of these will be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion. Weapons and other dangerous objects shall be taken from students who bring them onto the school district property or onto property within the jurisdiction of the school district or from students who are within the control of the school district. Parents of students found to possess a weapon or dangerous object on school property shall be notified of the incident. Confiscation of weapons or dangerous objects shall be reported to the law enforcement officials, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion. Students bringing a firearm to school shall be expelled for not less than twelve months. The superintendent shall have the authority to recommend this expulsion requirement be modified for students on a case-by-case basis. For purposes of this policy, the term "firearm" includes any weapon which is designed to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, the frame or receiver of any such weapon, a muffler or silencer for such a weapon, or any explosive, incendiary, or poisonous gas. Weapons under the control of law enforcement officials shall be exempt from this policy. The principal may allow authorized persons to display weapons or other dangerous objects for educational purposes. Such a display shall also be exempt from this policy. It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent, in conjunction with the principal, to develop administrative regulations regarding this policy.

POLICY OF STANDARDS AND ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN 7TH AND 8TH GRADE CO- CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

What follows is a summary of the standards and eligibility for participation in MS activities. For a complete version of the policy, please refer to DCSD Board Policy. (Code No. 503.4)

It is the belief of those concerned with the development of the youth of the Decorah Community Schools that membership and participation in co-curricular activities has a very positive effect in the development of constructive attitudes of citizenship. Among which may be listed are principles of justice, fair play, good sportsmanship, respect for rules and authority, respect for others and one's own health and physical well-being, development of leadership, group pride and teamwork, self-discipline, and values of self-sacrifice. It is also the District's belief that the individual family should be the guiding influence and determinant of student behavior.

It is further deemed important that participants, before starting in any of these programs, should be aware of the philosophy, opportunities, and policies and procedures under which they will be participating. Co-curricular activities are offered as an option and a privilege based not only on demonstration of a particular talent or ability, but also on demonstration of character embodying the values contained in this Policy.

Those who participate are expected to assume responsibility for maintaining high standards as defined by this Policy and the rules established by the activity's sponsor. Standards have been set for students who wish to participate at Decorah Middle School. Included are provisions to promote honesty and cooperation so that each student is able to have a positive learning experience as a participant in the co-curricular activity program. In order to retain eligibility for participation in these activities students must exemplify high standards of behavior and conduct themselves as good citizens both in and out of school at all times. Students who represent the

District in an activity are expected to serve as role models to other students and to members of the community. They are also expected to show respect toward the District they represent and to the fellow students and sponsors with whom they participate.

The other policies in regard to co-curricular participation will also be enforced. The Board strongly believes co-curricular activities are a privilege and not a right, and as a result students who participate in co-curricular events are held to a higher standard of academic performance and conduct.

Extra-Curricular Eligibility

In Decorah Middle School's standards-based grading system, it is imperative that students maintain progress towards achieving the standards set forth in the curricula of each course. Not every student will progress through the standards at the same rate, so with regards to policy, eligibility will hinge on Learner Behaviors. Students participating in extra-curricular activities at DMS will be responsible, respectful, and engaged.

During the course of a season, there will be two eligibility checks spaced approximately two-three weeks apart. At the designated times, each participant's learner behavior progress will be checked. Any student that has a score of "Not Yet Proficient" (NYP) will be placed on probation for one week. He/she must also complete a learning improvement plan within two days that will require input from both the teacher(s) and the coach. The purpose of the improvement plan will be to identify the action steps required to move the student from an NYP to a P on their Learner Behaviors. If a learning improvement plan is not completed and turned in within two days, the student will forfeit his/her eligibility for participation in the competition until it has been turned in with all necessary signatures.

At the end of the probation week, if the student has adhered to the plan and made the necessary corrections, they are fully eligible until the next check. If the student has not adhered to the plan and made the necessary corrections, he/she will forfeit the eligibility to participate in the competition. The student will still attend practice but will report to 9th hour each day (before going to practice at 3:40) until the action steps of the Learning Improvement Plan have been fulfilled. As soon as the steps have been completed, the student returns to full eligibility status until the next check.

School Attendance: A student participating in any extra-curricular activity must be in school by 11:30 am in order to participate in a contest or practice that day. A student is allowed to participate when absent if the student has a medical appointment, a family emergency, attended a funeral, or a situation that is deemed an emergency by the building principal or activities director.

Bus Trips: Players are expected to ride home with the team after games unless they have a signed permission slip from their parents. **The principal or the activities director must sign this permission slip prior to leaving the school for the competition.**

Parents: *Please make every effort to pick up your child promptly after practices and games. Coaches will give players a practice and game schedule.*

Practices: Athletes are expected to attend practice every day. If an exception is required, the student should let the coach know as early as possible and in person. **If school is dismissed early due to inclement weather, practice and/or competitions will be cancelled.**

Athletic Equipment: Athletes are financially responsible for all school equipment furnished to them. The student's family may be billed for any items not returned at the end of the season.

Multiple Sport Participation: Decorah Middle School students may find themselves wishing to participate in two sports during the same season. (In other words, a student wants to participate in both football/volleyball and cross country, or a student wants to participate in wrestling and basketball). Both coaching staffs will present a plan that allows a student to devote practice time to both sports during the first two weeks of the season, after which the student shall choose one or the other, and have the full support of all adults as the student continues on in that season. Attendance expectations would be included in that plan presented by the coaches of both sports. The activities director will sign off on the plan once agreement is reached. If an agreement cannot be reached, the student shall choose which sport to participate. A student wishing to do both might also consider participating fully in one sport during their 7th grade year, and the other sport during their 8th grade year, that way the student gets a full season of each during their middle school years.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Policy Violations The use of controlled substances, drugs (other than prescription), consuming alcoholic beverages, vaping/electronic nicotine delivery device, obscene/explicit materials, or use of tobacco are violations and will not be tolerated. Any violent act against another student will not be tolerated. Any student that is suspended three times in the span of a calendar year, would constitute a violation. Any other inappropriate, disruptive, or offensive conduct in violation of school district policy, regulation or student handbook provisions and/or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of any member of the student body, faculty, or staff, including but not limited to assault, refusing to cooperate with school officials or law enforcement authorities, acts of vandalism, hazing, bullying or harassment of other students and staff in any form, including inappropriate use of social media. The administration shall have the authority to exercise reasonable discretion in the interpretation and administration of this Policy and with subsequent good conduct violations. If any of the aforementioned occurs, he/she will be deemed ineligible, and the following offenses will ensue:

1st Offense: The maximum period of ineligibility for a first offense shall be six (6) weeks. This suspension begins immediately at the next practice or event of the first activity involved and runs for 1/3 of the activity. An individual making a truthful report of a violation of the Conduct Standards to a school administrator within four (4) calendar days of the occurrence of the violation is a self-report. In order to receive the sanction of a self-report, a student must follow up with a written and signed statement of confirmation to the activities director or his/her designee. This statement needs to be signed by both the student and the parent/guardian. Individuals participating in a school event after violating the Policy, but prior to making a self-report or administrative discovery, will be suspended with no opportunity for a reduced suspension. The self-report will result in the suspension running for 1/6 of the activity.

2nd Offense: The maximum period of ineligibility for a second offense shall be twelve (12) weeks. A student will be suspended for half the season beginning with the next practice. During the first two (2) weeks of suspension a conference with the student, parents or guardian, and counselors will be held to determine a course of action for reinstatement.

3rd Offense: The maximum period of ineligibility for a third offense will be one calendar year from the date of the 3rd offense.

-A student found guilty by a court of law shall be ineligible until reinstated by the school administration. A conference will be held to determine eligibility. (However, a violation may be found without regard to whether a student is charged or convicted of any crime by authorities).

-A student found guilty of theft, vandalism, and unauthorized possession on school property and other infractions

- Violations of the Conduct Standards are cumulative in two segments. The first segment will be at the conclusion of the students' 6th grade school year to the conclusion of the 8th grade school year. The second segment will be at the conclusion of the students' 8th grade school year through the end of the summer following graduation. At the conclusion of the students' 8th grade school year all prior violations will reset for the second segment of the students' four years in high school.

NOTICE AND DUE PROCESS

A student shall be provided a hearing with the middle school principal, associate principal and/or his/her designee. The student and parent/guardian will be given oral and/or written notice of the hearing. During the hearing, the student shall be told the basis for the accusations, and shall be given an explanation of the evidence. The student shall be given an opportunity, during the hearing, to present his or her side of the story.

The middle school principal and activities director shall determine whether the student has violated this Policy, and shall notify the parent/guardian of their decision within 48 hours in a written Notice of Violation of Policy of Standards and Eligibility, which shall contain the following:

1. The student's name and the names and address of the student's parents or guardians.
2. A statement as to the time, place and circumstances of the violation the student is alleged to have committed.
3. A statement describing the sanction to be imposed upon the student for violating the Policy and the effective date on which such sanction shall commence.
4. A statement that the principal's determination as to the student's violation of the Policy and the punishment imposed shall become final and effective, unless an appeal is taken within three (3) calendar days to the Superintendent.

The student and parent/guardian may appeal within three working days, to the superintendent and/or his designee, by delivering a written notice of appeal. The superintendent shall conduct an appeal hearing within three working days after receipt of the appeal notice and submit a decision in writing, which may affirm, reverse or modify the prior decision.

The superintendent's decision may be appealed within three working days to the Board of Education by delivering a written appeal notice to the board secretary. The secretary shall schedule the appeal for a regular or special meeting of the Board of Education, which shall be held within three working days after receipt of the appeal notice. The decision of the Board of Education shall be set forth in the written minutes of the Board and may affirm, reverse or modify the prior decision. All consequences will remain in force and effect during an appeals process until it is reversed or altered by the appropriate authority. If parents choose to file a court injunction to keep their son/daughter eligible to compete during the appeal process, the district will file a counter injunction to keep said student ineligible.

SCHOOL SONG

*On Decorah! On Decorah! Best bunch in the state,
We have pep enough to last through victory or defeat. Rah! Rah! Rah! On Decorah! On
Decorah! Boosting for our fame:
Fight, Vikings Fight! Fight! Fight!
We'll win this game.*

SCHOOL COLORS: Red and Blue

SCHOOL MASCOT: Vikings



