

## ***Parent & Guardian Handbook***



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Updated 08/2025

**School Mascot**

## West Highland Terrier – “The Westies”

### School Colors

Blue and Yellow

### Mission

*We serve as trusted partners in education with our students, families, and community. We prepare our students to be critical thinkers, responsible digital citizens, innovators and visionaries, resilient individuals, and global collaborators. We commit to inclusive practices and equity with an expectation of excellence from every student and employee every day.*

### Vision

*Every student will graduate on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.*

### Core Values

**Equity** – We strive to provide equitable opportunities and support for all students.

**Inclusivity** – We celebrate our diversity as a strength and welcome all students.

**Innovation** – We seek knowledge to create new and unique ideas to reach students.

**Integrity** – We trust that we do what is best for students through effective interpersonal relationships, dependability, and doing the right thing in all circumstances, even if no one is watching.

**Resiliency** – We believe in the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, solving problems, and coping with change and challenges.

**Well-being** – We take responsibility for the well-being of students’ physical and mental health, and take measures to help students, families, and employees feel supported and protected, in order to thrive.

## PWCS Vision 2025 Launching Thriving Futures

The PWCS Vision 2025 Launching Thriving Futures [Strategic Plan](#) , adopted February 2, 2022, outlines the collective vision that every student will graduate on-time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

# PWCS 4 Commitments

1. Learning And Achievement for ALL
2. Positive Climate And Culture
3. Family And Community Engagement
4. Organizational Coherence

[Learn more about Our Commitments](#)

## PWCS Philosophy Statement & Standards of Excellence

At Prince William County Public Schools, we envision a **cohesive school system** where clarity in leadership roles and responsibilities creates a foundation for educational excellence and accountability to our customers. Based in data-driven decision-making of the best practices in successful cohesive school systems, PWCS will be guided by a [strategic plan](#), aligned with current and relevant research for strong leadership practices, and focused on strengthening the instructional core.

PWCS operates with **fidelity** by integrating all facets of service under six core values: equity, inclusivity, innovation, integrity, resiliency, and well-being. These values forge the connection between central office and each school, framing every relationship, meeting, conversation, initiative, measurement and reward. As an authentic partner and trustworthy K-12 educational organization, maintaining solidarity of these core values throughout leadership practices assures convergence for student success, customer satisfaction, and divisionwide innovation.

Few processes live solely in the school or solely in the central office. Everything PWCS does is as a cohesive process, one that ebbs and flows through different departments, areas and schools. Within PWCS, no one operates independently because every achievement is reliant on togetherness. There is no division between PWCS central office and PWCS schools, only **Prince William County Public Schools**. The vision of a cohesive school system is the promise of convergence.

**Convergence** refers to the process where different educational systems, practices or technologies undergo exponential growth and become more aligned and integrated. As individual PWCS departments, schools, and initiatives experience exponential growth, the knowledge, practices and rewards start to overlap, building upon one another, affecting and effecting procedures, services, structures, innovation, and success.

To deliver the promise of convergence, **Commitment 4: Organizational Coherence** was established to represent the conscious commitment to align the entire school division as one team, united in a singular commitment to support all schools, students, and families. Outlined in this commitment are four objectives: create a systematic structure for strong cycles of continuous improvement; remove barriers to communication to facilitate collaboration across offices, schools, and families in the spirit of customer service; ensure that our strategic priorities are driving our investments; work toward convergence, operating as a cohesive school system with shared accountability for school and division goals.

Guided by current research and best practices in leadership, PWCS prioritizes **Instructional leadership** for principals to enhance student learning experiences and facilitate instructional efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness. To ensure principals have the time, energy, and resources to successfully research, practice and mentor productive instructional strategies and curricular design, PWCS established Standards of Excellence (SoE)

The **Standards of Excellence** codifies expectations and requirements for operating with organizational coherence towards convergence. These normative guidelines present pedagogical approaches and ethical frameworks in the spirit of a cohesive PWCS school system. Conduct, methodology, and action must align with the Standards of Excellence to ensure organizational coherence throughout central office, across PWCS schools, and within every PWCS classroom. When the PWCS vision is not discernible and direction is not explicitly stated, the Standards of Excellence serve as implicit orientation back toward the course of the PWCS Vision.

Our philosophical commitment is to cultivate a harmonious and effective educational system where leadership, collaboration, and equity converge to empower every student and educator within PWCS.

Our commitment to a cohesive school system is facilitated in the following Standards of Excellence:

- I. **Shared Responsibility:** We believe that the collective effort of principals, teachers, parents, executive leaders and support staff is essential to support learning and drive student success. Together, we share the responsibility and accountability for fostering an environment conducive to educational achievement.
- II. **Ultimate Accountability:** Accountability is the measurement of how you deliver on the promise of creating a thriving future for students. We believe accountability defines the effectiveness of the work being done in the classroom and establishes the benchmarks for building educators up. Aligning personal and organizational core values assures a moment-to-moment monitoring that informs, guides, and transforms leaders through ever-growing awareness within ourselves.

- III. **Equity and Access:** We are dedicated to ensuring equitable and adequate allocation of resources to meet diverse needs of all learners. This includes providing people, materials, support, professional development, curriculum, and funding to create a fair and inclusive educational experience for every student.
- IV. **Collaboration:** Recognizing the importance of interconnectedness, we emphasize collaboration between principals and central office. Principals are not isolated leaders but integral parts of a larger system, working cohesively to achieve common goals.
- V. **Operational and Instructional Excellence:** We strive for excellence in both operational and instructional domains: By minimizing managerial burdens on principals and equipping them with the necessary division expertise and support, we enable them to focus on their primary role as instructional leaders, thereby promoting the highest standards of educational quality.

## School Hours

Office hours 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Bell Times 9:10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

First bell: 9:10 a.m. *Students enter the building*

Tardy bell: 9:20 a.m. *Instruction Begins*

First Dismissal Bell: 3:45 p.m. *Students pack up and prepare for dismissal*

Dismissal bell: 4:00 p.m. *Students dismiss*

**Students should not be dropped off at school prior to 9:10 a.m. DO NOT send them early, to the office, or have them wait without the supervision of a parent or guardian.**

## School Calendar 2025-2026

August 18	First day of school
August 29	Labor Day weekend holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed to the public</b> )
September 1	Labor Day holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
September 23	Holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> in observance of Rosh Hashanah)
October 2	Holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> in observance of Yom Kippur)
October 13	Division professional development ( <b>no school for students</b> )
October 21	Holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> in observance of Diwali)
November 3	School-based conferences / professional development ( <b>no school for students</b> )
November 4	Teacher workday ( <b>no school for students</b> )
November 11	Veterans Day holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
November 26	Thanksgiving break ( <b>schools and offices closed to the public</b> )
November 27-28	Thanksgiving break ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
December 22 - January 2	Winter break for students and teachers – Holidays observed during winter break include Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year’s Day ( <b>no school for students</b> )
December 24-25, and January 1	Winter break ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
January 5	School Reopens
January 19	Martin Luther King Jr. holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
January 23	Teacher workday ( <b>no school for students</b> )
January 26	Division parent conferences / division professional development ( <b>no school for students</b> )
February 16	Presidents Day holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
March 20	Holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> in observance of Eid al-Fitr)

March 30 - April 3	Spring break for students and teachers – Holidays observed during spring break include Passover, Good Friday, and Easter ( <b>no school for students</b> )
April 2-3	Spring break ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
April 6	Teacher workday ( <b>no school for students</b> )
May 25	Memorial Day holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> )
May 27	Holiday ( <b>schools and offices closed</b> in observance of Eid al-Adha)
June 12	Last day of school

## PWCS Code of Behavior 2025-26

Victory Elementary utilizes a school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program along with the [PWCS Code of Behavior](#). Parents are expected to read and review the [PWCS Code of Behavior](#) with their student as part of the Back to School Packet in ParentVUE. The Code of Behavior contains **important information**, including guidelines on student conduct and bullying. Each school is committed to creating an environment in which students are free from bullying. Students, parents, and school personnel are strongly encouraged to report incidents of bullying in the following ways:

- Speak to a school administrator (e.g., principal, assistant principal). A school administrator will take appropriate steps to respond quickly and decisively to reports of bullying.
- Students or parents can report bullying incidents online. [PWCS Reporting Form](#)

## Attendance

The Prince William County School Board believes students must attend school regularly to realize their maximum potential. Prince William County Public Schools follow the provisions of the Virginia Code regarding compulsory attendance for all school-aged students. Student absences will be monitored at the school level and as required by Virginia law; parents shall make every effort to ensure their student's regular attendance.

### Updates for 2025-26

Revisions were made to Regulation 724-1- Attendance, Absences, Excuses, and Tardies

Key updates include:

- Schools may require a **doctor's note** when a student misses three consecutive days or a total of 10 days during the school year due to illness.
- Family trips or absences related to travel are **unexcused absences**.
- Students are considered chronically absent if they miss 10% or more school days in a school year. Both excused and unexcused absences count towards chronic absenteeism.
- Students are expected to **make up all missed assignments and assessments** for both excused and unexcused absences.
- **Military-connected students** may have up to five days of excused absences to visit a parent/guardian called to active duty or on leave from active duty.

[PWCS Regulation 724-1 Attendance, Absences, Excuses and Tardies](#)

## Attendance Terms

**Excused Absences:** Absences that meet the standards included in [Regulation 724-1](#) when a parent/guardian notifies the school within 5 days of the absence.

**Unexcused Absences:** Any absence that does not meet the regulation requirements, regardless of parent/guardian knowledge. Absences without parent/guardian notification within 5 days of the absence are automatically changed to unexcused.

**Pre-arranged Unexcused Absence:** Parent notifies the school prior to the absence; however, the absence does not meet the criteria included in [Regulation 724-1](#) for an excused absence. For example, when school staff are notified in advance of vacations, they are typically coded as Pre-arranged Unexcused Absences based on the criteria in [Regulation 724-1](#). While the advanced notification is greatly appreciated, these absences will likely be recorded as ***Unexcused***. Please contact school staff, should there be extenuating circumstances or if you are unsure if the request meets the ***Excused Absence*** criteria and the principal determines the appropriate attendance category for the absence.

**Truancy:** Excessive unexcused absences (five or more)

**Attendance Plan (Truancy):** Required at five unexcused absences to note all meeting attendees, reasons for the student's absence, interventions/plans to help improve attendance, etc.

**Attendance Conference Plan (Truancy):** Required at 10 unexcused absences with Interagency Team Meeting as an update to the attendance plan when the student's attendance has not improved. Prompts requirement for court referral reporting to VDOE.

## Attendance Monitoring, Thresholds and Action Steps

The PWCS attendance monitoring and intervention process is used by all schools to improve attendance and decrease dropout rates.

Text messages are sent **automatically** to parents/guardians each day a student has an **unverified absence**.

Attention 2 Attendance (A@A) letters are sent **automatically via U.S. mail** to parents/guardians.

**3 Unexcused Absences:** A2A first letter of truancy

**5<sup>th</sup> Excused Absence:** A2A Excessive Excused Absence Letter 1

**5<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence:** A2A Truancy Letter 2. Initial Conference – School Action Required.

**6<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absences:** School attendance team refers to and follows the attendance plan created at the Initial Conference.

***An Interagency Team Meeting is to be scheduled when a student has 2 unexcused absences after the Initial Conference.***

**7-10 Unexcused Absences:** A2A Letter 3. Interagency Team Meeting Scheduled – School Action Required.

**10<sup>th</sup> Excused Absence:** A2A Excessive Absence Letter 2. Conference scheduled with parent/guardian - School Action Required.

**Additional Unexcused Absences after Interagency Team Meeting:** Referral to Attendance Officer to schedule a meeting and/or proceed with further court actions.

**15 Consecutive Absences:** Registrar withdraws students and notifies Attendance Officer.

## Notification of Student Absence

All absences can now be submitted through [ParentVUE](#) accounts. Reporting your student's absence through ParentVUE will notify the office and the teacher of your child's absence. If the absence occurs on the **same day**, or if the absence is up to **30 days in advance**, please submit a note through ParentVUE.

To report absences through ParentVUE, Log into ParentVUE (phone app or online website), click on the blue "report absence" button. The absence type will default to "Pre-Arranged EXC" and you will be asked to enter a note, please describe the reason for the absence and upload a doctor's note if you have one. School staff will review the request and code it according to the PWCS Attendance Regulation. If the note is for **past attendance**, please send a note to the office or contact the school.

## Tardy

Students should be in their class ready for instruction to begin at 9:20 am. After this time, students are considered Tardy.

After 9:20 a.m., a parent/guardian should park in a designated parking space and is required to sign-in the student in the main office. Please **DO NOT** park in the fire-lane, bus loop or handicapped accessible spaces.

Students arriving after 9:20 a.m. by a late PWCS bus will not be marked tardy.

## Personal Electronic Devices

Personal devices not issued by VES or PWCS including (but not limited to) smartphones, smartwatches and tablets, should be off and away while at school. Personal devices on and out while at school are subject to being held by school staff for parent pick-up. The Prince William County School Board voted to adopt a bell-to-bell cell phone-free education policy on December 4, 2024, and took effect on August 1, 2025. To learn more about the cellphone-free education policy please visit the [PWCS Cellphone-free education information website](#).

## Personal Items and Trading Policies

To maintain a focused and productive learning environment, personal items brought to school should not be traded with peers. Trading personal items can be highly disruptive to the class.

### **Trading Cards Policy:**

- Trading cards are not allowed in school.
- Any trading cards brought to school will be confiscated.
- Confiscated items will be available for parent pick-up only.

By adhering to these guidelines, we can ensure a better educational experience for all students.

## Bus Information

**Bus Pass** Whenever there is a change in the usual bus or stop that a student is assigned to, a parent/guardian must send a note, call, or email school staff. The office staff will approve the requests and communicate changes to the drivers. Without proper notification from an adult to school staff, the change will not be permitted.

**Kindergarten Bus Riders** All Kindergarten students must be accompanied to and from the bus stops by a parent, guardian, or other designated individual. Those authorized to take custody of kindergarten students must be listed on the Kindergarten Authorization Form and always have identification available when receiving a student at the bus stop. An older sibling who is at least 12 years old may take custody of a kindergarten student at the bus stop. No change of custody is required if an older sibling/student is riding the bus with a kindergartener unless the parent has indicated otherwise. If an adult or older sibling is not present, the student will be returned to Victory, and an authorized adult will need to pick up the student from the Main Office.

## Bus Behavior

Riding the school bus is a privilege and must be honored by maintaining appropriate behavior. Courtesy and cooperation are required of all passengers. Please adhere to the following safety rules:

1. Stay on the sidewalk, not on lawns or in the road, when waiting for the bus.
2. Rough or unsafe play puts students at risk.
3. Do not crowd or push to get on the bus. Be seated according to the directions of the bus driver. Be seated and remain seated until you arrive at your destination.
4. Keep the noise level low to reduce the bus driver's distractions.
5. Any items or objects not permitted at school should not be brought onto the bus.
6. Keep the bus aisle clear of objects and bodies.
7. Do not take any objects or body parts out of bus windows.
8. Ride only your assigned bus unless you have an approved written request from home.
9. In case of emergency, follow the instructions of your bus driver.

Safety is the number one concern on the bus. Harassment of any child by another child will not be tolerated. [The PWCS Code of Behavior](#) contains strict bus regulations. The bus driver cannot be distracted from driving the bus carefully. If a bus driver feels that a student's behavior is endangering that student or others, he/she will write a bus referral. The bus referral is sent home to be signed by the parent/guardian and discussed with the child. It is especially important for parents and students to support the bus driver's rules. Bus referral consequences will be determined by a school administrator. If a bus referral results in a bus suspension, the parent is responsible for providing transportation to and from school for the suspension's duration.

## Car Riders

**You must register every year for your car rider number.** Place your new, enlarged number in the passenger window. If someone else is picking up your child, be sure they have the number. Without this number, the driver may be asked to park and come into the building. Only one number is issued per family.

When driving on school grounds, you should use slow, safe speeds and avoid abrupt movements, stops and starts. For the safety of students, staff and other drivers, personal devices should not be in use while driving.

1. When entering the car rider line, drivers will wait until the vehicle has passed the initial cones before allowing children to exit where the sidewalk begins. **For safety, children should not leave the vehicle prior to the start of the sidewalk at the loading dock entrance.**
2. For adult and student safety, students are expected to unload **independently, promptly, and exclusively from the right side of the car while you remain in your vehicle.** If you need assistance, please notify a staff member.
3. Despite the weather, drivers should pull up as far as possible toward the cones around the loop. When raining or chilly, provide children with an umbrella and appropriate outerwear if needed. Drivers **should not** stop and drop children off in front of the doors.
4. Once your student has exited the vehicle, please do not pull around the vehicle in front of you. Maintain a single lane and as cars begin to move, follow the car in front of you.
5. When students arrive after 9:20 am, you will need to park in the main lot and accompany them into the building. Please do not park your vehicle in the Emergency Fire Lane, Handicapped Accessible spaces, or release students to enter the building without a parent/guardian.
7. At dismissal, school staff will call students by number, please practice this number with your child.

## Westie Walkers

Westie walkers must live or receive after-school care at an address in the designated walking zone along Tygart Lake Dr.

Walkers should not be picked up and/or dropped off in vehicles. Students being dropped off/picked up in vehicles should utilize the car rider line.

To the greatest extent possible, please refrain from bringing pets to the primary pick up/drop off area.

Westie Walkers will be picked up at the crosswalk at 9:10 am by school staff, and the group will walk in a line to the school's front entrance.

Walkers will be called for dismissal at 3:45pm and report to the designated location. School staff will walk with students along the sidewalk in a single file line, to the crosswalk on Tygart Lake Drive. Students will cross Tygart Lake Dr. using the crosswalk, supported by school staff. Please encourage them to always cross at the crosswalk and do not call or motion to them to cross the street in any other way.

## Parent/Guardian Pick Up

Picking students up during the instructional day should be avoided to the greatest extent possible. When a child is picked up early, a parent/guardian, with identification and listed on the Emergency Card is required to sign the child out in the office. School staff will then call the child to the office for dismissal. Staff will not call students in advance of parent/guardian arrival and sign-out. Early student sign-out and pick-up may take longer than expected. Please plan for this additional time. Please refrain from picking students up for dismissal after 3:30pm.

## Change in Student's Dismissal Routine

If your child will depart from school differently from the established routine, please notify school staff with a note, email or phone call. A phone call to the office is best practice. An email to the teacher may not be received in time for a variety of reasons. It is recommended that phone calls concerning changes be made **before** 3:30 p.m. to allow the office staff to notify the teacher or transportation staff and make the appropriate arrangements in time before dismissal. If no communication from a parent/guardian is received, the child will be dismissed using the usual and established route.

# Medication

Medication should be administered at home unless it is absolutely necessary that it be given at school. Any medication to be administered at school must be brought to the clinic by the parent. Every medication must be in the original container with a completed medication consent form. If the medication is a prescription, a physician authorization and signature are required. Please refer to [PWCS Regulation 757-4](#) for further details.

# Safety and Health Procedures

Please be assured that students are encouraged to stay in class for minor ailments. Whenever necessary, calls to the parent will be made to arrange pick-up of a sick child and/or discuss a health concern/injury.

Every precaution is taken to prevent accidents; however, arrangements should be made in the event of an emergency. In the case of an emergency, a parent is called first. It is vital that the school have the name of the family doctor and whom to notify in case the parents cannot be reached. Please complete the Back to School Packet in ParentVUE with the most updated Emergency contact information.

## When should a student stay home due to illness?

1. Fever of 100.4°F and over - exclude until the student has been fever-free for at least 24 hours.
2. Conjunctivitis (pink eye), strep infections, ringworm, and impetigo are all infections and must be treated with medication for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Please do not allow affected students back before this time so that other students are not infected unnecessarily.
3. Rash of unknown origin (especially if accompanied by a fever).
4. Head injury.
5. Severe coughing or difficulty breathing.
6. Colds - a child with thick or constant nasal discharge should remain home.
7. Diarrhea—sudden increase in frequency to more than three loose/watery stools per day. Exclude until student has been symptom free for at least 24 hours.
8. Vomiting—unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a diagnosed non-communicable/non-infectious condition (such as dysmenorrhea, dysphagia, etc.).
9. Abdominal pain that continues for more than two hours or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms.

10. Stiff neck associated with a fever and/or a recent injury.
11. Inadequate immunizations with known disease outbreak in school.
12. Refer to the [Virginia Department of Health Communicable Disease Reference Chart for School and Child Care Facility Personnel \(PDF\)](#) for other exclusions/information.

## Mental health telehealth services are available to PWCS students at no cost to families through Hazel Health

Hazel Health offers bilingual therapy in over 19 languages, allowing PWCS K-12 students to connect with a licensed therapist who speaks their language.

In therapy, your student may gain essential tools to succeed in school and life, such as:

- ✓ Improving communication
- ✓ Building confidence
- ✓ Fostering healthy relationships

All students – regardless of insurance or immigration status – can access virtual therapy at no cost to families. Every student can receive the support they need.

Visit the PWCS [Mental Health Telehealth Services for Students website](#) to learn more.

## School Volunteers and Visitors

Victory Elementary School is a secure facility. To gain access to the building, school visitors are required to ring the doorbell and follow the prompts as directed by the office staff. Photo ID is required for access to the building and a Visitor's Badge must be visible while in the school.

Classroom visitors/volunteers are permitted only when prior arrangements have been made with the teacher or school staff. All volunteers will need to review [PWCS Regulation 511-10 Attachment I](#) and complete [PWCS Regulation 511-10 Attachment II](#).

Formal visits to your child's classroom must be prearranged with the school. Parents are required to make requests in writing, stating the purpose, nature, and relevance to a specific concern. Administrators will review all requests. Parents must be accompanied by an administrator and observations should not exceed 45 minutes. Parents are encouraged to visit the school on scheduled days for Parent/Teacher conferences, special school programs and projects, PTO meetings, and Back to School Night. Parents wishing to meet with a teacher outside of the scheduled conferences should contact the teacher through email to set up an appointment.

## Lunch

PWCS has determined that VES will be participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for 2025-26. Complete lunches (peanut free) including vegetarian alternatives are available daily at no cost to students. A la carte items will be an available option at an additional cost.

The most up to date information from PWCS School Food and Nutrition Services is available online at [pwcsnutrition.com](http://pwcsnutrition.com)

Any questions regarding the cafeteria should be directed to the Cafeteria Manager, Alex Dotson at 703-257-5068 or [dotsonaw@pwcs.edu](mailto:dotsonaw@pwcs.edu).

## Lunch with Your Child

- A photo ID and Visitor lanyard are required to have lunch with your child.
- Parents are provided a designated lunch area outside of the cafeteria to enjoy the time with their student.
- Lunch visits are limited to the assigned lunch time, and the designated lunch area must be vacated by the scheduled times.
- Parents may only bring lunch for their students.
- At the conclusion of lunch, visitors will sign out in the main office. They should not go with students to the classroom, recess or other areas of the school.

# Field Trips

Each grade level will go on at least one off-site field trip. Chaperones will need to review and complete all volunteer requirements and attachments. Chaperones will be required to check in with the office, provide ID, and receive a visitor's badge.

Please refer to the following PWCS Policies and Regulations regarding field trips:

- [PWCS Policy 642 School-Sponsored instructional Field Trips and Athletic Trips](#)
- [Regulation 642-1 Procedures for Planning Instructional Field Trips, Athletic Trips, and Requests for Activity Buses](#)

# House System

The House system is a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance the school's culture and climate by fostering a sense of community, teamwork, and school spirit. This framework divides students and staff into smaller groups, known as "houses," to create a more intimate and supportive environment.

## Key Features of the House System:

- **Community Building:** Each student is randomly assigned to one of the five houses upon entering the school and remains in that house until graduation. This system helps students build lasting relationships with peers and staff outside their immediate classroom.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Students earn tickets for their house through positive behavior, academic achievements, participation, teamwork, and other commendable actions. These tickets contribute to their house's overall success.
- **Engaging Activities:** The school organizes various events such as schoolwide assemblies, house holidays, and house celebrations. These activities promote a sense of belonging and encourage students to take pride in their house and school.
- **Motto:** "FIVE HOUSES, ONE SCHOOL!" encapsulates the spirit of unity and collective identity at Victory School.

## The Five Houses:

1. **House Nukumori (House of Kindness)** - Represented by the color purple.
2. **House Amistades (House of Friendship)** - Represented by the color red.
3. **House Isibindi (House of Courage)** - Represented by the color green.

4. **House Onraka (House of Unity)** - Represented by the color orange.
5. **House Sollevare (House of Uplifting)** - Represented by the color gold.

This system not only enhances the school experience by promoting positive interactions and achievements but also ensures that every student feels valued and connected within the school community.

## Westie Spotlight Award Program

The Westie Spotlight Award Program is a positive behavior support initiative designed to celebrate our students' achievements both inside and outside the classroom. Each month, two students from each class who exemplify our school motto, "I am Respectful, I am Responsible, I am Ready to Learn," will be selected for this special recognition.

Awarded students will have their photograph taken with their certificate and will have the opportunity to choose a prize from our prize bucket. Parents will be informed of the winners each month, allowing us to share and celebrate these accomplishments together.

## Activities and Clubs

### Victory Voices

- **What is Victory Voices?**

Victory Voices is a fun and welcoming choral program for Victory Elementary **4th and 5th grade students** who love singing, performing, or want to explore music in a supportive group setting. Students learn vocal technique, choral skills, and sight-reading, and perform together throughout the year. **No audition required—everyone is welcome!**

- **Who Can Participate?**

All 4th and 5th grade students at Victory Elementary, regardless of prior music experience.

- **Season Schedule**

The Victory Voices season typically runs **from September through March** each school year.

- **Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are held **once a week before school begins**.

The *current* rehearsal time is **8:10 AM**, with students going directly to class afterward.

A full, updated calendar is shared with families at the start of each season.

- **What Students Do**

Learn and practice choral singing techniques  
Develop musical literacy and sight-reading skills  
Prepare for school and community performances  
Build confidence, teamwork, and stage presence

- **Student Expectations**

**Consistent attendance** at all rehearsals and performances

**Punctual arrival** each week

**Respectful behavior**, following school expectations and the PWCS Code of Conduct

Written notice required for excused absences

Repeated unexcused absences, tardies or behavior concerns may result in removal from the program

- **Program Fee**

The program fee has typically been:

**\$25** for students needing a Victory Voices t-shirt and music materials

**\$5** for students who already have a Victory Voices t-shirt (from a previous year or sibling)

- **Performances**

Victory Voices performs **several times throughout the school year**, giving students the chance to showcase what they've learned. In recent years, the group has participated in **three evening concerts**, including:

A **Winter Concert**

A **Pyramid Concert** alongside nearby PWCS schools

*(such as T. Clay Wood ES, Cedar Point ES, Marsteller MS, and Patriot HS)*

A **Spring Concert**

These performances are typically held at **local high schools**. Concert dates, times, and locations vary each year and are shared with families at the beginning of the season.

## Robotics Club

Robotics is a **small, highly competitive team** of **8–10 students in 4th and 5th grade**. The club runs during **fall and spring seasons** and participates in competitions, allowing students to develop problem-solving, collaboration, and critical-thinking skills.

## No Place For Hate

### What is No Place for Hate?

No Place for Hate is a schoolwide initiative that promotes **kindness, respect, inclusion, and a**

**safe learning environment for every student.** The program unifies various school activities and efforts under one message: *our school is a place where everyone should feel valued and supported.*

### **Student Pledge**

Students commit to:

- Treating everyone fairly
- Being kind to all students, including those who are different from them
- Reporting bullying or hurtful behavior to a trusted adult
- Helping create a safe, welcoming, and positive school community
- Working together to ensure our school is truly *No Place for Hate*

### **Who Participates?**

Students are **nominated by their teachers.**

Each 4th and 5th grade classroom selects **two students** who have demonstrated:

- Leadership qualities
- Interest in inclusion and social justice
- Kindness and encouragement toward peers
- Strong representation of Victory Elementary's values

### **What Students Do**

Members meet **monthly** to:

- Discuss what they observe in their classrooms
- Identify positive changes they want to bring to Victory
- Plan and lead schoolwide activities that promote kindness, acceptance, and awareness

These student leaders help implement campaigns, projects, and discussions that support a positive school climate. Because of their leadership role, they are held to **high expectations** throughout the school year.

### **Why It Matters**

- Builds a long-term, positive, and inclusive school culture
- Empowers students, staff, and families to stand against hate and bullying
- Encourages empathy, respect, and teamwork
- Helps students develop leadership and advocacy skills

## **Purple Star Program**

The Purple Star designation is awarded by the **Virginia Department of Education** to schools that show a strong commitment to supporting **military-connected students and their**

**families.** These schools provide extra care, stability, and understanding for students who experience frequent moves, transitions, and the unique challenges of military life.

**Victory Elementary is proud to be a Purple Star School,** supported by a dedicated **Purple Star Committee** made up of staff members and student representatives from all grade levels. Our committee's primary mission is to ensure that new military-connected students feel welcomed, supported, and connected to our school community.

### **Support for Military Families & All Transitioning Students**

While our main focus is on military-connected children, the Purple Star Committee also supports **any student** who joins or departs Victory mid-year.

**Welcome Westie** New students receive a personalized welcome drawing or note from a student committee member to help them feel seen and welcomed right away.

**Once a Westie, Always a Westie** Departing students receive a keepsake certificate that reminds them they will always be part of the Victory family—no matter where they go next.

**Hug-a-Buddy Corner** For military-connected students who may be emotionally overwhelmed—whether adjusting to a recent move, coping with a family member's deployment, or simply needing a quiet moment—we offer a **Hug-a-Buddy Corner** in the library.

This calming space includes two military-themed Build-A-Bear buddies available to any student who needs a comforting break.

**Spirit Wear Support** To ensure new military students feel immediately part of the Victory community, the committee partners with our PTO to set aside **Victory spirit wear** for students who enroll outside the normal ordering window.

### **Schoolwide Involvement & Events**

The Purple Star Committee also contributes to several important school traditions and community service events, including:

- **Helping plan the Veterans Day Assembly**
- **Supporting Purple Up Day activities** to honor military children
- **Assisting with the annual Spring Food Drive,** promoting service and kindness throughout the school

These efforts honor our military families and help build a school culture grounded in empathy, gratitude, and belonging.

### **Who Can Join?**

We especially encourage students with a **military background** or a **basic understanding of military life** to join, as their experiences bring meaningful leadership and empathy to the

committee.

However, **any student** who is passionate about welcoming and supporting others is invited to participate.

## Battle of the Books

Battle of the Books is a competitive reading club designed for **4th- and 5th-grade students** who enjoy reading and teamwork. Each fall, **Mrs. Lindsay** visits 4th and 5th grade classrooms to introduce the club and explain the expectations to interested students.

### Membership Requirements

Students who want to participate must:

- Receive a **teacher recommendation**
- Agree—along with their parents—to attend **at least 95% of meetings**
- Commit to reading **all ten Battle of the Books titles**

There is **no participation fee** for the club. The only cost families are responsible for is the **club t-shirt**. All books needed for the competition are provided by the **Victory library**, ensuring every student has access to the full reading list.

### Schedule

The club begins in **late October** and continues through **the end of March**, culminating in the **Semi-Final Competition**. If the team advances, they move on to the **Finals held in April**.

Battle of the Books meets **once a week in the morning**.

**This year's meeting time: Tuesdays at 8:15 a.m.**

### Competition

Throughout the year, students work together to read, discuss, and prepare for a trivia-style competition based on the ten selected books. The goal is to foster a love of reading, build collaboration skills, and represent Victory with pride at the semi-finals—and hopefully the finals.

## Victory Strings

Victory's 5th graders have the exciting opportunity to join **Victory Strings**, a program designed to introduce students to orchestra and help prepare them for middle school music programs. Students may choose to play the **violin, viola, cello, or bass**, depending on their interests.

All **strings classes are built into the regular school schedule**, so students can participate without needing to arrive early or stay after school. Classes meet **twice a week for 35 minutes**, giving students consistent time to learn and practice.

Families will receive information at the start of the year about **instrument-rental options**, making it easy to get started with the instrument of their choice.

Throughout the year, Victory Strings students typically perform in **three concerts**, and they also have the option to participate in **Solo and Ensemble**, where they can shine individually.

Victory Strings is a wonderful way for 5th graders to explore music, build confidence, and grow as part of a supportive musical community.

## Victory Safety Patrols – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

The Victory Safety Patrol gives selected students the opportunity to serve their school community while developing leadership skills and acting as positive role models. Patrol duties may include helping with flag management, supporting the Green Team with recycling efforts, modeling proper bus behavior, monitoring hallways to ensure safe transitions, assisting younger students during dismissal, and occasionally helping at school events such as Open House or VESPTO activities.

Our vision is to empower students to contribute to a positive school climate by demonstrating responsibility, kindness, and leadership in all areas of the school.

To participate effectively, patrols are expected to:

- Arrive on time for duty
- Maintain excellent conduct at school and in the community
- Consistently model expected behaviors
- Use positive, affirming language (e.g., "Please walk")
- Wear their patrol belt properly at all times

Students who do not meet expectations may lose the privilege to serve. Selection for the program begins in June with 4th graders, who must complete an application by the last day of school. Final decisions are based on teacher recommendations, behavior records, and administrative review. Patrol assignments are made at the start of the school year, and students who are not selected may reapply each quarter.

# Birthday Treats & Invitations

Birthday Treats may only be non-food items and can be shared with students in the classroom upon teacher's approval. Birthday invitations are not to be distributed at school.

The [VESPTO](#) member toolkit provides a platform for shared contact information to be used for this purpose.

# Friendship Day February 14

- Teachers will allow students to exchange Valentines for 20-30 minutes at the end of the day on Friday February 14.
- Food/Candy items are discouraged as always.
- Should students bring food or candy, these items may be distributed and sent home for parents or guardians to inspect and approve for consumption.

# Inclement Weather – Cancellations and Early Dismissals

School may be cancelled or dismissed early due to inclement weather or other emergency conditions. Please refer to the [PWCS home page](#) for up-to-date information on school closings. Please have alternate plans for instances of early dismissal due to inclement weather.

# Report Cards

Report Cards will be available in ParentVUE on the following dates

First Quarter: November 12, 2025

Second Quarter: January 30, 2026

Third Quarter: April 15, 2026

Fourth Quarter: June 20, 2026

# Assessments

**IOWA – Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT):** The Iowa test is given in March to all 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. It is used to determine if high performing students need sixth grade extended math or seventh grade extended math.

**Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT):** CoGAT is required to be used in grade 3 as a universal screener for gifted identification. It is given to all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in early November. The test is online, and students receive a score in verbal, nonverbal, quantitative and a composite score. Scores of 96 or higher are targeted for identification.

**HMH Reading Growth Measure:** The HMH Reading Growth Measure is a computer-adaptive test of reading growth administered to students in grades 2 through 5 at three different points in time; once in the fall, winter, and spring. This assessment measures student performance against grade-level expectations, tracks student growth, and informs instruction.

**Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT):** NNAT is a required, non-verbal, universal screener used to measure general reasoning and problem-solving ability of students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It is used to identify students for gifted services and is given once during the school year in October or November.

**VALLSS (Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System):** A literacy screener is administered three times per school year—in the fall, winter, and spring—for students in grades K-3. This screener is designed to identify students who may be at risk for developing reading difficulties.

**Standards of Learning (SOL) Test:** The Standards of Learning (SOL) for Virginia Public Schools establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in Reading, Math, Science, and VA history. Students in grade 3-5 participate in the test once a year in April-May.

- **Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW):** The IRW component of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments is a type of test question designed to assess students' reading comprehension and writing skills simultaneously. It involves reading a nonfiction passage and then answering multiple-choice questions and writing a short response related to the passage. This test is given in the Spring to students in Grade 5.

**Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP):** The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program evaluates the performance of eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities. The VAPP tests assess the Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL). VESOL was developed from the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) but has been reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity

to make the content relevant, accessible, and appropriate for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These are given to students in grades 3-5 in Reading, Mathematics and Science.

**VGA (Virginia Growth Assessment):** A test that measures student progress in reading and math for students in grades 3-5. The purpose of the VGA is to measure student growth, measure progress in reading and mathematics content standards, provide information about areas of strength, areas for growth, whether the student needs additional support, whether the student is at-risk of falling behind. These are administered twice per school year.

**Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP):** The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) gives schools, teachers and families a complete picture of school readiness in 4 key areas: Mathematics, Literacy (connected to PALS), Self-Regulation, and Social Skills. The Early Math Assessment System (EMAS) provides important information on early numeracy and assists with early intervention efforts. The same is true of the social-emotional readiness component of the assessment.

**World-class Instructional Design and Assessment WIDA/ACCESS:** This assessment is provided to English Learning (EL) students in grades K-5 once per school year between January and March. The test serves as a monitoring tool that reports progress toward English language acquisition in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

## Lost and Found Items

Parents are asked to label clothing and items of students with the student's name. All lost and found items are stored near the main entrance. Items are removed and donated once per month by volunteers.

## Victory Advisory Council (VAC)

The school advisory council function is connected to the Prince William County Schools Strategic Plan, supporting Commitment 3- Family and Community Engagement, Objective 3.1-Prince William County Schools will engage families as authentic partners in education to

support academic progress. By 2025, at least 85% of schools will have a high functioning advisory council.

The purpose of a school advisory council is to provide opportunities for members of the school community to participate in the decision-making process at the local school level. A primary

function of the council is to serve as an advisory body to the principal and school leadership team. Members fulfill both representative and advisory roles. While the council does not create a school policy, they play a critical role in helping to shape the continuous improvement plan through feedback and recommendations from the community. The functions of the council include the following:

- assisting with the identification of school needs
- reviewing, evaluating, and shaping the school's continuous improvement plan
- facilitating communication between school staff and the school community
- providing input for the proposed school budget

Prince William County Schools recognizes the school level advisory council as a critical conduit of family engagement. To assess current functioning, the advisory council team reviewed a variety of data sources including survey results, policies and regulations, bylaws, agendas, staff information and meeting minutes. At present, advisory council functions, meetings and processes differ between schools across the school division.

## Victory Elementary School Parent/Teacher Organization (VESPTO)

The PTO is a vital part of the school and community relationship. The simple act of joining the PTO helps contribute to our mission. Enriching the education of Victory students and enhancing the efforts of the staff through involvement of the talents and resources of the parents and guardians.

Ways to become involved:

- Attend a meeting, "second Tuesday of each month on Zoom and help shape the direction of the PTO, by giving feedback directly to the members, board, school staff and administrators. Join a Committee
- Join a Committee, even just running an errand or helping with set up can make a world of difference.

There are lots of ways to get involved, events coming up and opportunities to support students, staff and Victory families, but the VESPTO needs your help. Please contact [help@vespto.com](mailto:help@vespto.com) with questions and suggestions.

To join the VESPTO and access the VESPTO Facebook page, use the following link to their [webpage](#) or go to [victorypto.membershiptoolkit.com](http://victorypto.membershiptoolkit.com)

Instructions are included to first create an account and then join the PTO. Make sure to opt-in to the directory if you'd like to share contact information with other grade-level families. This is a great way, for example, to connect for birthday party invites. Having an account also ensures you are ready to checkout on Clubs, Bingo Registration and more.

## VESPTO Board

Danielle Bencivenga	President	<a href="mailto:president@vespto.com">president@vespto.com</a>
Marcia Guarniere	Vice-President	<a href="mailto:vicepresident@vespto.com">vicepresident@vespto.com</a>
Ashley Clarkin	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@vespto.com">treasurer@vespto.com</a>
Christian Martin	Member at Large	<a href="mailto:atlarge@vespto.com">atlarge@vespto.com</a>
Erin Biswas	Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary@vespto.com">secretary@vespto.com</a>
Stacey Waite	Volunteer Coordinator	<a href="mailto:volunteer@vespto.com">volunteer@vespto.com</a>

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*policies, including Section 504 and Title IX: Associate Superintendent for Human Resources,  
Prince William Co Public Schools, P.O. Box 389, Manassas, VA 20108*