

The ABC's of Flint Hill Elementary School

A Parent Handbook

2444 Flint Hill Road
Vienna, VA 22181
School Office: 703-242-6100
Attendance Line: 703-242-6161

Welcome to the Flint Hill Elementary School (FHES) community! The FHES PTA works in partnership with the school and is dedicated to promoting the welfare of children at home, during school, and in the community.

This handbook is intended to help you deepen your understanding of the culture of Flint Hill's community of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. If you have any questions, about any of the information found in this handbook, any member of the PTA Executive Board would be more than happy to talk with you. Please give us a call! More in-depth information can be found on our website, fhespta.org.

2015-16 PTA Executive Board

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A

Absence and Tardy. For an absence, please call the Attendance Line (703-242-6161) and leave a message stating why your student is absent and email your child's teacher. If the school does not hear from you by 9:00 a.m., the school will call your home or work to verify your child's absence.

If your child will be tardy, please call the Attendance Line stating why your child will be tardy. Upon arrival, a parent/guardian must enter the office to sign the student in. The student will be given an office pass and sent to his or her classroom.

- Unexcused Absence/Tardy – Reasons for unexcused absence/tardy may include but are not limited to family and/or student vacations, child care situations, non-school-related activities or missed school bus.
- Make-up Work – When students are absent, reasonable opportunities to make up work shall be provided. Makeup work is encouraged so that the student will profit from future instruction. For excused absences, makeup work receives credit; for unexcused absences, make-up work MAY not receive credit.

Art. The PTA supplements FHES' excellent art curriculum through the GRACE Art program, which is the art-in-the-schools program of the Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE). GRACE Art includes in-class presentations by parents of FHES students of historical art subjects, followed by coordinating art projects.

Assignment Notebooks. Flint Hill provides daily homework assignment notebooks to students in second through sixth grades. If a student needs to replace his/her assignment notebook, a fee will be charged. Many teachers also post daily homework assignments on Blackboard (for more on Blackboard, please look under "B").

B

Back to School Night. Back to School Night is usually held on a Thursday in mid-September during the early evening. Please check the school calendar to verify the date. This night is for parents only and there is NO childcare provided. Back to School Night is an opportunity for you to meet your child's teacher and learn about their curriculum for the year. There is a PTA Open House typically held on the same night where parents can learn about the various PTA programs and other organizations at FHES.

Bicycles/Scooters. All students living close to school are encouraged to walk or ride their bikes or scooters to school. Students who ride bikes/scooters to school must review the rules in the Students' Responsibilities and Rights handbook for conduct on the way to and from school, and for riding safety. These students are responsible for the security of their

own bicycles/scooters, and should not bring them to school unless they have a lock to secure them to the bicycle stands located on school property. Safety helmets must always be worn. All bicycles/scooters must be walked on school property.

Birthday Celebrations. Individual classes find unique ways to celebrate birthdays in the classroom. Students are not permitted to bring in birthday treats to celebrate their birthdays at school.

Blackboard. Blackboard is part of Fairfax County Public Schools' 24/7 learning. It is used daily by the "upper grade" teachers of 4th through 6th graders to post short-term and long-term homework assignments and tests. Daily use of Blackboard continues in Thoreau Middle School and James Madison High School.

In the younger grades, use of Blackboard varies among teachers. Ask your classroom teacher whether s/he will be using Blackboard this year. For information on registering your student(s), go to <http://www.fcps.edu/fcps247.htm>.

Business Partners. FHES currently has two business partners: Outback Steakhouse in Vienna and Sunrise Assisted Living in Oakton.

C

Clinic. The school clinic is staffed daily by a clinician, Mrs. O'Connor. If your child uses medication that must be taken during the school day, you must contact Mrs. O'Connor and follow the rules established by Fairfax County School Board. The clinic also provides hearing and eyesight screening for Kindergarten and 3rd grade students. For **short-term** medication (non-prescription medication for up to three days, prescription medication for up to 10 days), Mrs. O'Conner can give it to the child with only the parent filling out and signing the medication form. For **long-term** medication, a doctor's signature is necessary on the medication form.

Communicating with Your Child's Teacher. FHES' teachers welcome opportunities to build positive relationships with parents. The PTA encourages parents to be proactive and initiate positive working relationships with teachers. A few helpful hints:

- Teachers are extremely busy during the first few weeks of school. Teachers prepare thorough presentations about school year curriculum and share those with parents during Back To School Night (September).
- Teachers do not have access to email and voicemail as often as professionals in other fields do (because they are either teaching or do not have the privacy in the classroom needed to review and respond to specific needs). If you leave a voicemail or send an email to a classroom teacher, expect to receive a reply usually within 24 hours. If you do

not hear back within 48 hours, it is recommended that you send a second request before taking any other actions.

- Teachers want to know about any concerns you have as soon as possible so they can address your child's needs. Please try to keep any concerns between you and the teacher. If a counselor or principal meeting is needed, please let the teacher know about the meeting.
- If your child works with a specialist, keep the regular classroom teacher in the loop by CCing her or him on any email correspondence you have with the specialist.

D

Dismissal. Students are dismissed at 3:35 p.m. If you are picking up your child from the lobby please make efforts to arrive no earlier than five minutes before dismissal. Please remember to wait quietly as classrooms wrap up for the day. Please see kiss-n-ride for information about picking up your child in the car pool line.

E

Enrichment Programs. At FHES, the PTA's priority is to enrich learning and student life. We do that through a number of programs designed to complement what students learn in the classroom and to challenge them to think in new ways. To learn more about our many enrichment programs, visit the Programs tab on our website, www.fhespta.org.

Excel Award. At the end of the school year, teachers choose two students (one boy and one girl) from each class to receive the Excel Award. Students that earn the Excel Award show the "RITE" stuff: Respect, Integrity, Teamwork, and Excellence all throughout the year.

F

Faithful Falcons. This is part of Flint Hill's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and relates to Character Education. Starting in January, two students in each class are selected for consistently demonstrating the following attributes: Friendship in December; Appreciative in January; Leader in February; Considerate in March; Open Minded in April; and Nice in May. These students have a popcorn party with Mr. Rivera and receive a Joey Card (free kid's meal) from Flint Hill's business partner, Outback Steakhouse in Vienna.

Falcon Feather Stickers. Your child may receive a feather sticker from a teacher for demonstrating the appropriate everyday behaviors the school encourages, such as helping to clean up in the classroom or bringing in a library book on time. Your child has a day full of opportunities to earn an individual Falcon feather.

Entire classes can earn Falcon Feathers, too. For example, classes earn a class feather if the class is walking quietly in the hall. If a class earns 50 feathers, the class receives a reward such as extra recess or class celebration. Kindergarten classes are awarded after 10 class feathers.

Forgetful Kids. Teachers have noticed that kids learn responsibility faster if parents do not assist them by bringing in their forgotten homework, lunches and instruments (the PTA pays for cereal and milk or PB&Js for kids who forget, so no one goes hungry!). If your student forgets homework or an instrument at home, please hold off on your instinct to run the item over to school every single time. Your student will learn the consequences and will probably be more motivated to remember the next time.

Falcon Five.

1. Respect people and their property
2. Act safely
3. Follow directions the first time given
4. Come prepared to learn
5. Cooperate with others

G

Grace Art – Please see under “Art.”

Grade-Level Special Events. While students in each grade participate in special classroom projects, grades 3 through 6 hold special annual events. These are planned by the grade-level teams, and made possible by parent volunteers. If you have a student in the following grades, you can look forward to their participation in these events:

3rd Grade Chinese New Year Celebration

4th Grade Colonial Day

5th Grade China Museum

6th Grade Farewell Event

H

Hours of Operation.

Office Hours

**Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

School Hours

**Monday through Friday
8:45 a.m. to 3:35 p.m.**

Please note that school hours may change on a yearly basis. For the most current listing of school hours, please see the FCPS website.

Happy Apple. In Kindergarten, kids take turns being the Happy Apple. If your child is the Happy Apple for the day, he or she gets to do things like be the line leader, wear a special necklace, and bring the library cart to the library. The first time your child is Happy Apple, the entire class draws a picture of your child. Sometimes your child can bring in a show-and-tell item. In the middle of the year, your child will create a poster when he or she is the Happy Apple. The poster will display information like your child's phone number and address. Your child will also show the class that he or she can tie his or her shoes. Initially, names are drawn to determine the Happy Apple. After all students have had a turn, a monthly calendar is sent home to let you know when your child will next be the Happy Apple.

I

Information and Resources.

Fairfax Public Schools Handbook: Hardcopy is distributed when students enroll

Principal's Corner: Mr. Rivera's newsletter: This is emailed to all parents on a regular basis.

School Directory: Available online to PTA members

PTA Weekly Update: Weekly email update sent to all parents

School Lunch Menu: Sent home in Tuesday Folders or available at
www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food_at_school/ Flint Hill Elementary School Website
www.fcps.edu/FlintHillES

Flint Hill Elementary School PTA Website www.fhespta.org

**Please note that when searching for FHES on the Internet that there is another school called "Flint Hill" in the area. When searching for FHES, please do not use the key words "Flint Hill" and instead use either "FHES" or "Flint Hill Elementary School."

K

Kiss & Ride. This is a system to drop off and pick up students at school. For student safety, it's important to review and follow the Kiss & Ride rules described on the FHES website, www.fcps.edu/FlintHillES/about.htm. Please do NOT drop off kids at the SACC door. Students should not be dropped off early as there is no adult supervision prior to the school doors opening. The Kiss & Ride line opens 15 minutes before the first bell.

Keep In Touch is an email notification system of Fairfax County Public Schools. Subscribe to KIT (www.fcps.edu/kit) and select the types of news updates you would like to receive electronically, such as announcements on delayed openings and school closings. FHES also sends KIT messages to families about school news.

L

Lost and Found. Items left at school are placed in the "lost and found" that is located by the cafeteria. Items left at lost and found are donated to charity twice a year. Make sure to label all coats, hats, gloves, hoodies, and lunch boxes!

Lunch. You can eat lunch with your child(ren) in the cafeteria. Check with your child's teacher to find out what time your child's class attends lunch. Make sure that you first check in at the office and put on your nametag, and then you can meet your child's class in the cafeteria.

Once students start school at FHES they are assigned a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for use in the cafeteria. This PIN is your child's cafeteria account number and remains the same every year. Parents may choose to create a lunch account through MySchoolBucks.com. You can pre-load money into the account through MySchoolBucks.com or by check (not cash). If you send checks, make checks payable to *FHES Food Services* and include your child's name and PIN on the check. Your child will receive a stamp on his/her hand when only \$5.00 or less remains in his or her account. Money transfers from year to year.

Remember to keep money in your child's lunch account! If your child forgets lunch or runs out of money in his/her account, the PTA and school provide a light lunch of cereal or PB&J and milk.

Lice. There are reported cases of lice in elementary schools across America each year. If lice are found or reported in your child's classroom, a note will usually be sent to you through your child's backpack.

M

Morning Announcements are a daily student news program. FHES students learn about school news each morning on their classroom television monitors. Sixth grade students deliver the news every Friday morning. Ms. Rankin (SLRankin@fcps.edu), the school librarian, oversees this program.

Moment of Silence. Fairfax County Public Schools participate in a moment of silence each morning. At FHES it occurs before the Pledge of Allegiance. Please set a good example for our students by observing the silence when you are in the building at this time.

MySchoolBucks.com is a service you can use to pre-load funds into your child's cafeteria account. Once an account is established, parents may also check the fund balance, view seven days of purchases, and receive an email when the balance gets below \$5.00.

O

Open House. Open House is usually held the Thursday before school starts, typically in the early afternoon from 1-3pm. You and your child can visit his or her classroom and meet the teachers. You may also drop off school supplies in your child's classroom to avoid bringing in the heavy load of supplies on the first day of school.

P

PBIS. This is FHES' Character Education program, called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support. (PBIS). At the beginning of each school year, every family receives a PBIS handbook, which outlines the systems in place to create a respectful learning environment. If your child receives a Falcon sticker, it's because s/he has been recognized for living up to the "Falcon Five" expectations. Be sure to congratulate your child when s/he wears a sticker home!

PLC. FCPS and FHES function as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The school focuses on: **Learning** rather than teaching, including the use of best practices; **Collaboration** including people, process and tasks; and a focus on **Results** with data and goal-driven systematic pyramid of interventions.

PTA. The FHES PTA is an active organization of parent volunteers who are always seeking new members and input. Our PTA mission is *"To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children."* Please see www.fhespta.org for more information.

Volunteer Opportunities. The FHES PTA oversees dozens of active volunteer and fundraising programs at FHES. A current list of the PTA Programs is found on the PTA website under "Volunteer Opportunities." Please contact flinthillptavp@gmail.com for more information on the various programs available.

Membership. Membership dues are paid yearly at the beginning of the school year. These dues go entirely towards funding FHES programs, including new equipment for classrooms, teacher supplies, and enrichment programs.

PTA Elections. Elections to the PTA Board are held each spring for the upcoming school year. For all other PTA committees and program chairs, vacancies are filled yearly. For more information on a particular committee, or if you are interested in helping with the PTA, please contact flinthillptavp@gmail.com. There are a variety of positions available with a range of time commitments for moms and dads alike.

PTA Weekly Updates. The PTA Weekly Update is emailed to you weekly by FHES' PTA. This is a great way for you to see what is going on in your child's school on a weekly basis. If you are not receiving these updates, please email the PTA at vice_president@fhespta.org.

R

Running Program. Every student is encouraged to run or walk one lap on the track each day after lunch or more if time allows. Five laps around the track equals one mile. Students record their completed laps on running cards (each card is worth 5 miles), which they turn into the gym teacher for tracking purposes. For students in grades 3-6, one running card is due each quarter, with one card being equal to a C average. Toe tokens (beads to string on shoe laces) are awarded for every card, with special tokens being awarded for 25, 50, 75 and 100 miles. Students that complete 100 miles or more receive a trophy at the end of the school year.

S

SACC. School Age Child Care offers fun, safe and educational care for 5-12 year-olds before school, after school and during school vacations in most Fairfax County elementary schools. It is run by Fairfax County Government, not FPCS. For more information visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc/Sacc.htm. There is usually a waiting list for SACC, so register early!

SCA. The Student Council Association is FHES' student government organization. The SCA is open to all 6th graders. It conducts service drives and promotes school spirit through leadership projects and fundraising. The FHES SCA consists of various student teams that

work together to support the efforts of the school. The SCA holds one general meeting a quarter to plan and support various school efforts.

School Pictures. Students take pictures twice a year. Students take only individual pictures in the fall, and class and individual pictures in the spring.

School Supplies. There are two ways to buy supplies. You can order supplies from the PTA or you can buy your own. The PTA sends home a form for ordering supplies at the end of the school year for the next school year and can be purchased online at home. These forms are usually given out at the Kindergarten orientation in the spring. If you want to buy your own supplies, please check the school website.

Scouts. FHES students can join Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts through their local chapter. This is an independent organization that is not run by the school or county.

Cub Scouts Pack 987 includes more than 90 boys in Tiger Cubs (1st grade or age 7), Wolf Cubs (2nd grade or age 8), Bear Cubs (3rd grade or age 9) and Webelos (4th grade or age 10). Interested families can visit www.pack987.org for more information.

FHES' Girl Scouts comprise troops of Daisy Scouts (K – 1st grade), Brownies (2nd – 3rd grades), Juniors (4th – 5th grades) and Teen Scouts. Interested families can contact Laura Beth Vietor at laura_elizabeth_@hotmail.com.

SET stands for Skills Enhancement Time, which is the time used by teachers to re-teach and/or remediate concepts taught. SET time can also be used as an enrichment period.

Snack. Students are able to bring a snack to eat in the classroom. Snacks must come from home and should be healthy (the school cafeteria will no longer provide snacks). Many teachers ask that snacks do not require spoons. Snacks must be free of any allergens that are banned from the classroom, such as peanuts (about half of FHES classrooms and all Kindergarten classrooms, are peanut-free). No candy, please, especially after Halloween!

T

Think Sheets are a communication device between teachers and parents, and are part of FHES' PBIS. Think Sheets are used to help students reflect upon their actions and make positive choices in the future. These sheets do not go on any official record and principals are not usually notified when a student receives a Think Sheet.

Tuesday Folders. Each Tuesday the school sends home a yellow envelope with timely information from the school, the PTA and your child's teacher in it, such as newsletters, notes, student work, PTA notices, and other written communication. This important package needs to be reviewed and any important forms should be returned the following day. In years past, this envelope was filled with about a tree's worth of papers that would

need to be reviewed. In our effort to go green, the PTA now sends a PTA Weekly Update to complement the paper envelope for school. Make sure you receive your PTA Weekly Updates by visiting our website (www.fhespta.org) and sending a message in the Contact Us section.

V

Volunteering. When you first start volunteering, you will need to fill out a Falcon Five Parents Code of Conduct. If you volunteer during the school day, please:

- **Enter through the front door (Door 1) and check in at the front office.** You will need to be buzzed in at the front door. There is a computerized check-in system that will generate a nametag for you. This includes taking your pictures. You must bring a valid ID.
- **Wear your nametag visibly.** Kids and staff members alike should be able to see your nametag.
- **Observe silence in hallways** and during the morning moment of silence (all FCPS schools observe a moment of silence; at FHES it occurs before the Pledge of Allegiance). Some classrooms do not have permanent walls, and hallway voices – including whispers – can distract the students.
- **Refrain from casually asking the classroom teacher about your child's progress.** Teachers take parent requests about student performance seriously, and are happy to discuss a variety of topics with parents. When it comes to individual questions about student performance, teachers like to prepare and ensure conversations can happen in a private setting and that there is adequate time allotted to the discussion.

Volunteering in the Classroom. There are many opportunities to volunteer in the classroom. Parents can volunteer to be the room parent, help at class parties, provide GRACE Art lessons or lead work groups. Ask your teacher about his or her volunteer needs, and check out our website, www.fhespta.org. Contact any committee chair if you would like to help out!

W

Working through Concerns. Sometimes parents have concerns about something that happened in the classroom, or may disagree with a teacher's approach to a given situation. Staying within the bounds of a respectful school environment, the PTA urges parents to take the following steps in working through concerns with classroom teachers:

1. **Pick up the phone.** As soon as possible, and before discussing the concern with anyone outside your family, call and leave a detailed message for the teacher about the

topic. Ask that teacher to call you back to discuss the situation. Please let the teacher know if you would like to talk for a few minutes or if you would prefer a more formal conference.

2. Expect your phone call to be returned usually within 24 hours. Classroom teachers have few opportunities to check voicemail or email during the school day, and may be checking messages in the evening or very early the next morning.

3. See if a direct discussion with the teacher addresses your concerns. If you feel that your needs are not being met, it may be appropriate for the two of you to agree to involve a school administrator in the discussion. Involving other people before this point is counterproductive.

4. If you and the teacher create a plan to help your child, follow through on the plan at home. Teachers see true improvement in students whose parents reinforce the teachers' directions at home.

Y

You, as parents, play an active role in your child success. You are joining a community that looks forward to working with you.

Z

Zee End!!