

Student & Parent Handbook
Southwest Middle School
Career Academy
2021-2022

ROADRUNNER

PRIDE

Productive

Respect

Integrity

Driven

Environment

Cindy Hester, Principal

Eighth Grade: Garey Coke--Assistant Principal and Kathryn Watts--Counselor

Sixth Grade: Anarah Henderson--Assistant Principal and Heather Griffin--Counselor

Seventh Grade: Josh White--Assistant Principal and Linda Shipley--Counselor

ACADEMICS

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to do their own work. Students who choose to not do their own work will be expected to resubmit the assignment. Parents will be contacted. Repeat offenses will become a disciplinary matter.

GRADING SCALE

The Gaston County Schools Grading Scale is:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 59

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued at the end of each grading period. Interim reports are sent home at the midpoint of each grading period. Grades are also accessible through the Parent Portal. Parents may also contact the teachers to discuss their child's academic performance. .

Report Card Distribution Dates

October 28 January 13 March 24 June 7-mailed home

ARRIVAL

Car riders and walkers may arrive at school beginning **at 7:30am. Supervision is not available until 7:30 am.** Students arriving **after 7:30 am** will be directed to their homeroom class.

Grade and go breakfast will be served to students who are eating as they enter the building and report directly to their homeroom class.

ATHLETICS:

All students may try out for the following teams: softball, cheerleading, golf, basketball (girls and boys), soccer (girls and boys), track (girls and boys), volleyball, football,

wrestling, and baseball, **with the exception of** sixth grade students, who are not permitted to try out for football.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- Be a resident/GCS approved transfer student for SWMS.
- Pass 3 of 4 core classes (including math/language arts for both the semester AND the school year for fall eligibility), 3 of 4 core classes at semester for spring.
- Meet attendance requirements.
- Pass current physical exam (within 12 months).
- Cannot be 15 years old on or before October 16 of the current school year.
- **Meet behavioral and academic expectations of the athletic department and individual teams. Speak to your coach for specific requirements of your team.**

ATTENDANCE

ABSENCES

Great student attendance goes hand in hand with great academics; attending school is critical to your success.

Please observe the following procedures regarding necessary absences:

- To be considered for an excused absence, within 3 days of your return from an absence, bring a note to your homeroom teacher stating the following: your name, date, days of absence, reason for absence and parent/guardian signature.
- Students accumulating **more than 12 absences** during the school year will be referred to the retention/promotion committee to make a determination regarding promotion or retention.

MAKE UP WORK

When returning from an absence, students will have 3 days to make arrangements regarding their assignments. **Work scheduled prior to absences (projects, tests, papers, labs) are due the day the student returns. Any absence believed to be an educational opportunity must be approved in advance by the principal.**

TARDY/LATE TO CLASS

Students are considered tardy to school if they arrive to class after the morning bell rings at 8:30. Students are late to class if they are not in the classroom when class begins.

Students who accumulate excessive unexcused tardies and/or are excessively late to class are subject to disciplinary consequences.

To qualify for perfect attendance a student can have no absences – excused or unexcused.

BEHAVIOR

Students are **expected** to follow the rules, expectations and procedures of Southwest Middle School and Gaston County Schools. Students who choose to follow these expectations and policies will be rewarded for making good behavior choices. Rewards may include special acknowledgements, classroom privileges or invitations to special events. Students who choose not to follow these expectations and policies will receive consequences, such as loss of classroom or school privileges, confiscation of an item, restitution, or suspension.

At SWMS, we emphasize the following Roadrunner PRIDE traits: Productive, Respect, Integrity, Driven, and Environment. Students will be taught and expected to show these traits throughout the school by following expectations in all common areas of the school and in classrooms.

HALLWAY EXPECTATIONS

- Walk on the right side of the hallway
- Walk silently when traveling as a class to and from lunch
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Keep moving and be on time
- Do your part to keep the hallways clean and free of trash

CAFETERIA EXPECTATIONS

- Be polite by saying “please” and “thank you” when requesting food
- Stay in your place in line
- Do your part to keep the area clean and free of trash
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Stay seated until directed by an adult

BATHROOM EXPECTATIONS

- Use the facilities immediately
- Wash your hands before leaving

- Put paper towels in trash can
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Do your part to keep the area clean and free of trash

BUS EXPECTATIONS

- Follow the Student Code of Conduct on the bus and at bus stops.
- Refrain from eating or drinking on the bus.
- ALWAYS follow the bus driver's directions.
- Remain seated whenever the bus is moving.
- Keep all body parts and items inside the bus at all times and to oneself.
- Use an inside voice for conversations on the bus.

ASSEMBLY EXPECTATIONS

- Enter and exit quietly and in a single file line
- Remain quiet when speakers are speaking
- Stay seated
- Pay attention
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Do your part to keep the area clean and free of trash

BUSES

Students must ride their assigned bus and get off at their assigned bus stop.

Riding the bus is a privilege. Choosing not to follow bus rules (see Bus Expectations under 'Behavior' section) will result in suspension from the bus.

Note to parents:

- An administrator must approve any bus change. A change may be requested by a parent in writing using a transportation form.

CAFETERIA

Students are to eat their **own** lunch and are permitted to go through the serving line only once. Students are to consume all food and drinks inside the cafeteria; food or drinks are not to leave the cafeteria. Parents are welcome to have lunch with their students. Students **CANNOT** bring fast food bags and drinks into the cafeteria. This is in compliance with federal guidelines. See "Behavior" section for cafeteria expectations for students.

STUDENT MEALS

The School Nutrition Program operated by Gaston County Schools will provide ALL students enrolled at Southwest Middle School free breakfast and lunch for the 2021-2022 school year. A la carte items will be sold at cost. A la carte items may not be charged. **Check, Cash, or Money Order** can be accepted in the school cafeteria. Parents/Guardians may utilize **www.mypaymentsplus.com** to pay with their credit or debit card.

SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

Students with medical conditions such as diabetes may request modification to school meals by completing a **Diet Order form**. Diet Order forms may be obtained from the Cafeteria Manager, the School Nurse, the School Nutrition Center, or on the School Nutrition page on the Gaston County Schools website (www.gaston.k12.nc.us). The Diet Order form must be **signed by a physician** and returned to the Cafeteria Manager or the School Nutrition Center. **This is to be completed annually.**

FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY

To ensure proper safety and sanitation, all foods served to students in the school must be obtained from a commercial food service entity which is subject to local rules, regulations and inspections. Students may bring lunch if they chose not to eat from the cafeteria.

CLUBS

CLUB PARTICIPATION

All students are eligible to participate in student clubs. Membership is subject to the requirements available from each teacher-sponsor. Clubs being offered may vary year to year, as all clubs must have a teacher sponsor. More information on school clubs will be provided after the school year begins.

DISMISSAL

All students are to remain in class until their bus is called or until walkers, car riders, or in-season athletes are dismissed via a school-wide announcement. All car riders must exit at the main entrance at the front office area. All walkers must exit at the end of the seventh grade hallway to avoid having to cross any traffic on campus.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Parents/guardians must come to the office to sign students out and should have a photo ID. Please refrain from picking up students after 2:45 unless there is an emergency. Students must be in attendance for half of the school day to be counted “present.”

STUDENT DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP AREAS

Car riders must be dropped off and picked up at the front entrance of the school. Please use the circle driveway for all arrivals and departures. This requirement exists to safeguard our students’ physical safety. All morning drop off traffic is single file line along the curb. Our afternoon car riders load in both lanes. Please be sure to choose the lane that allows you to pull up the closest to staff members on duty. Drivers should pay attention to the staff member who is directing traffic and signaling to drivers which line is moving forward. Drivers should pull all the way forward directly behind the car in front of them, and the students will walk up the sidewalk to get to their vehicle. For our students’ safety, changing lanes or passing other vehicles is NOT permitted unless directed by a staff member on duty or by the School Resource Officer.

DRESS CODE

As stated in the Gaston County Schools Code of Conduct:

The appearance of any young person is primarily the responsibility of that individual and his/her parents. Each student is expected to maintain an appearance that is neither distracting to other students nor disruptive to the educational environment or the safe and healthy climate of schools.

Students shall not wear:

Headwear - Hats, bandanas, hair picks, combs or other types of headgear or sunglasses in the building.

Clothing- Clothing that displays sexually explicit words or drawings, profanity, alcohol or drug gang symbols. No style of clothing or the manner in which it is

worn may expose undergarments or create a distraction or disturbance in the educational setting.

The expectations noted above represent the minimum standards established throughout the school system. In addition, items not specifically mentioned may still be deemed inappropriate in a school setting in the judgment of the school administration. The Board of Education recognizes that local law enforcement agencies may determine that wearing particular gang related attire may present a threat to student safety. The Superintendent will work collaboratively with these agencies to prohibit such dress. This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Superintendent who will make any proposed recommendations for change to the Gaston County Board of Education.

In addition to the items specifically outlined above, SWMS has these additional clothing guidelines:

Shirts/Tops/Dresses: Spaghetti straps, halter tops, strapless tops and sleeveless shirts with extended arm holes are not allowed in school.

Pants/Shorts/Skirts: Must be minimally mid-thigh; holes in clothes must be below mid-thigh unless shorts or leggings are worn underneath; must be worn at the natural waistline.

Leggings: Leggings are not the same as pants or shorts. Therefore, students who wear leggings must wear a shirt that covers all of their backside.

Sleepwear: Pajama pants and bedroom slippers are not appropriate school attire. Blankets are not permitted to be worn or carried around.

Students who choose not to follow the dress code will be allowed to call home for appropriate clothing. Students will be assigned to the Behavior Lab until appropriate clothing is brought to school.

ELECTRONICS

CELL PHONES

Cell phones must be turned off and placed in the student's bookbags. No cell phone or headphones should be visible during the school day in the building. Should a student choose to have their phone on and/or use it during the school day, school staff will take the phone, label it with the student's name and secure it in the front office. Repeated violation of this expectation will result in additional consequences which may include in school or out of school suspension. **Only a parent/guardian will be allowed to pick up a confiscated cell phone.**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Gaston County Schools encourages 21st century teaching and learning. However, unless it is a rare occasion specified by a particular teacher in writing, **electronic devices are to be left at home**. Gaston County Schools and Southwest Middle School are not responsible for any personal electronic devices brought to school.

RESPONSIBLE USE AGREEMENT FOR COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE

All students will be required to sign a Responsible Use Policy. Failure to follow the rules can result in denied technology access.

FUNDRAISERS

SCHOOL SALES

No items may be sold on the SWMS campus unless they are part of an authorized school sale or club/athletic project associated with SWMS.

LOCKERS- WE ARE NOT USING LOCKERS AT THIS TIME.

LOST AND FOUND

The lost and found area is located in the counseling suite near the behavior lab. Students are encouraged to mark clothing, handbags, book bags, books, etc. with your name so that lost items may be returned to you. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity monthly.

MEDICATION

The Gaston County Board of Education discourages the use and administration of medication at school but realizes that sometimes it is necessary for the health of the student. The school nurse is designated to administer these medications.

There are two categories of medications:

Long-term medications- prescriptions taken daily for the entire school year. These medications require a doctor's authorization form and a parent's written permission (available at the front office).

Short term medications- Prescriptions taken daily for the length of the illness. These medications require a doctor's authorization and must be in the original container with the student's name written on it. We cannot distribute medication sent in plastic bags.

Students should give medication and a note from a parent with instructions directly to the nurse upon arrival at school. All medicines should be in the original container.

Special Note: It is against school policy for students to carry any prescription medication on their person on the school campus. The only exception is epinephrine, insulin, and any other specific medication ordered by the physician specifying that they can carry on their person. With the exception of cough drops, students are not allowed to carry any non-prescription medicine on their person. Violation of this policy will result in administrative consequences up to and including out-of-school suspension.

SAFETY

ASBESTOS

The EPA requires Gaston County Schools to perform surveillance of asbestos materials in all Gaston County schools every (6) months. All asbestos materials are in satisfactory condition at Southwest Middle. We shall continue to manage them in place, as recommended by the accredited management planner. The results of the surveillance are on file in the management plan in the school's administrative office. These reports may be viewed anytime during normal school hours.

BOOKBAGS

Bookbags are allowed in the classrooms now since lockers are not currently being issued.

CHANGES IN TRANSPORTATION

Please do not change your student's way home and call the school. Changes will not be accepted over the phone. For a student's safety and security, please establish the route home **before** coming to school. Students often get confused and miss their ride when this occurs. Any change must be received in writing and include a parent signature and date.

SAFETY DRILLS and METAL DETECTION

Fire, tornado and lockdown drills are held periodically throughout the school year.

Pulling the fire alarm without cause is not only a danger to the school and fire department personnel, it is also a crime. For these reasons, SWMS will suspend and/or seek criminal prosecution against any student endangering students, faculty, staff, or fire department personnel by falsely pulling the fire alarm.

Southwest Middle School conducts frequent random metal detection before school, during school and athletic events. Students are expected to comply with metal detection procedures as instructed by the administration.

SCHOOL TELEPHONES

Students may use school telephones *only* in emergency situations. Students must have a note from a teacher to use the phone.

Phone messages for students will be delivered at the end of the day. We safeguard our students' instructional time; therefore, students will NOT be called out of class to receive phone calls.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Counselors

School counselors are available to see students in small groups or individually. Students wanting to see the counselor must have their teacher submit a counselor intervention request and secure a pass from their teacher. Parents are welcome to contact our counselors. We ask that you make an appointment if you wish to see a counselor so they will be able to give you the time you deserve.

MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIAN

All Gaston County Middle Schools have a mental health clinician on site. This is a partnership with Gaston County Schools and our local mental health agencies.

NURSE

The school nurse is able to assist all students who have a medical concern. Students needing to see the nurse must notify their teacher to initiate a nurse referral. The school nurse will come to the classroom.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

Our SRO is here to assist the entire Southwest community in keeping our school safe. He or she is one whom you can report a problem to if you see it. He or she is also here to assist in the daily security of our school and all athletic events.

SOCIAL WORKER

The social worker is here to help students with a variety of needs which interfere with their education. These needs range from personal needs, attendance concerns and social needs. He is accessible to any student who has a pass from their teacher. The social worker is also a resource for parents. Parents are encouraged to reach out to the social worker if needed

VISITORS

All visitors must enter through the front door and check in with a valid ID at the front office upon entering the school. Anyone not a member of SWMS faculty/staff or student body is considered a visitor. Visitors are not allowed anywhere in our buildings without permission from the office. We are limiting visitors at this time.