

# FACULTY HANDBOOK

The Westminster School at Oak Mountain  
2011-2012

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## 1. FACULTY EXPECTATIONS

This is a general description of the expectations for teachers at WESTMINSTER and the basis on which they will be evaluated. In addition, it is expected that teachers will comply with applicable school policies and guidelines.

### 1.1. General Expectations

- 1.1.1. Spiritual Life: Each Westminster team member should be an active member in good standing at a local church and should seek to follow Christ and “live in a manner worthy of the gospel” both at school and in his personal life. Each member of the faculty and administration should be committed to know, understand, and build mentoring relationships with the students.
- 1.1.2. Team Community: Each Westminster team member should seek to develop authentic relationships with other members of the team. Each member should be open, honest, and honoring of other team members – seeking to build a healthy spiritual community. Each member of the Westminster team should help to build a collaborative, collegial, and cooperative working environment. Conflict among team members is to be dealt with biblically.
- 1.1.3. School Community: Each member of the Westminster community should be proactive in maintaining good communication and healthy relationships within the broader Westminster community including students, parents, board members, and church staff. Community events, even if not required, should be a high priority for this reason.

### 1.2. Classroom Expectations

- 1.2.1. Classroom Management / Environment: The teacher is expected to maintain a neat, organized, clean, and stimulating classroom environment for his students. This implies that the students will take an active part in cleaning and maintaining the room’s appearance. The teacher should set up simple, manageable class routines to accomplish basic tasks (e.g., taking attendance, collecting homework, daily cleaning schedules, storing and distributing materials). Special care should be taken on the last day of each week to have the classroom ready for Sunday School.
- 1.2.2. Classroom Decorum and Discipline: The teacher should be very familiar with and able to apply the spirit, as well as the letter, of school rules. An orderly (not necessarily always silent) working atmosphere is to be the norm. Students should be aware of the class and school rules and be encouraged to exercise self-discipline. However, when administrative discipline is necessary, the teacher is expected to give the principal an accurate accounting of the student’s offense. The teacher is expected to deal with the vast majority of corrective discipline situations within his classroom.

- 1.2.3. Lesson Preparation and Presentation: The teacher should have a thorough knowledge of and interest in the subjects he is assigned to teach. All subjects should be taught utilizing the goals, objectives, materials, priorities, and methods prescribed in the curriculum guide. The teacher is expected to encourage the students to see how all subjects are interrelated as parts of God's integrated universe. Clear language and appropriate vocabulary are also expected. The teacher should incorporate a variety of methods and seek to develop a biblical, gospel-centered worldview.
- 1.2.4. Teacher Planning: For lower school teachers, weekly lesson plans should be ready on RenWeb by 4:00 p.m. on Friday. For upper school teachers, lesson plans should be emailed or turned in to the upper school office each week. The teacher's weekly and quarterly plans should reflect creativity and a good use of class time.
- 1.2.5. Parent Communication: The teacher should communicate regularly with parents. Emphasis should be placed on getting to know families and letting them know what is happening in the classroom.
- 1.2.6. Professionalism: The teacher should consistently demonstrate pride in the school by his work, punctuality, speech, attitude, dress, and attention to duties.

### **1.3. Recording and Reporting Student Attendance**

- 1.3.1. Lower School teachers should record attendance daily, and Upper School teachers should record attendance at the beginning of each period.
- 1.3.2. Students who are tardy in the morning should report to the office for a tardy slip before going to class. The office will record the tardy in RenWeb with the appropriate reason code. If a student does not have a tardy slip, the teacher may choose to send the student to the office or record the tardy in RenWeb.
- 1.3.3. The Upper School Coordinator and Lower School Secretary will be responsible for tracking absences and tardies and entering reason codes. Teachers are to report excessive tardies and absences to an administrator.
- 1.3.4. When students are absent in grades K-6, missed assignments and all necessary books or materials should be left on the makeup work table in the lobby before 3:00 p.m. each day the student is absent. Please use only this method unless a sibling is in the same class.
- 1.3.5. Students in grades 7-12 may get assignments from classmates or by contacting their individual teachers.

### **1.4. Working Hours**

- 1.4.1. School Day: The school day for full-time faculty begins at 7:25 each morning.
- 1.4.2. Meetings: Teachers are expected to attend all faculty meetings, department meetings, summer trainings, faculty orientations, and scheduled conferences with parents and administrators. Attendance by all faculty members is required at the following community events: Community Dinner, Board Christmas Party, Graduation, Salutatio, and Open House.

- 1.4.3. Extra Help: Teachers are encouraged to be available at least once each week (before or after school hours) to assist students who need individual help on a temporary basis.
- 1.4.4. Sick Leave: Each full-time teacher is allowed five days sick leave during each contract year. Part-time teachers will receive sick days on a prorated basis. Sick leave includes absences due to the sickness of a member of the immediate family.
- For each day taken in excess of the five days, a day's pay will be deducted from the teacher's pay. The Lower School Principal and Upper School Principal are responsible for providing this information to the Director of Operations.
- 1.4.5. Teacher Absence (due to illness or family emergency): Lower school teachers should notify their principal and upper school teachers should notify the receptionist by phone between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. (The earlier the call, the easier it is to secure a substitute teacher.) The teacher should then follow up with either the principal or receptionist to communicate plans for the day.
- 1.4.6. Teacher Personal Leave
- Each full-time teacher is allowed two personal leave days during each contract year. Personal leave is understood to be any planned, non-emergency time.
  - Requests for personal leave should be submitted in writing via e-mail to the Lower School Principal or Upper School Principal at least one week prior to the planned leave. Leave requested on shorter notice may be granted at the discretion of the administration.
  - Administration will be responsible for making arrangements for substitutes for faculty members taking personal leave.
  - Personal leave days may not be accumulated from year to year.
  - It is preferable that personal leave days not be taken during the first two weeks or final two weeks of school or to extend long holidays ( e.g., Christmas, spring break).
  - For each day taken in excess of the two personal leave days, a day's pay will be deducted from the teacher's pay. The Lower School Principal and Upper School Principal are responsible for providing this information to the Director of Operations.

## **1.5. Faculty and Staff Dress Code**

As role models in the Westminster community and as representatives of Christ, faculty and staff are to set an example by dressing professionally, modestly, and appropriately.

- 1.5.1. Men should wear neatly pressed slacks, an oxford-type shirt, and professional shoes. Men should wear ties at any special school event where faculty/staff attendance is required (e.g., community meetings and programs, Grandparents' Day).
- 1.5.2. Women should dress professionally and modestly. Should you have specific questions or need particular clarity, talk with a female administrator.
- 1.5.3. Casual Days: Westminster sweatshirts, polos, and casual pants may be worn on casual days. Some casual days will be scheduled, and others may be called due to special circumstances. Westminster polos may be worn on Fridays.

## 1.6. Staff and Student Relations

In order to facilitate healthy, biblical relationships, the following guidelines are understood as representative of the practices and philosophies of Westminster. Staff members are to remember that they serve as shepherds over the students and as models of Christ before the students (Titus 2:7, 8).

- 1.6.1. Contact: Staff members should be careful that physical contact and verbal interchanges with each other and with students avoid even the appearance of impropriety (I Peter 2:12).
- 1.6.2. Time Alone: If it is necessary for a staff member to spend time alone with a student or staff member of the opposite sex, it should be arranged that they are easily visible to the public (e.g., an open door, a windowed room).
- 1.6.3. Visibility: Teachers should not cover the windows in the doors of their classrooms at any time with the exception of lockdown procedures.
- 1.6.4. Communication: Special precautions should be taken when communicating to students via telephone, email, and over the internet.

## 1.7. Supervision of Students

Teachers should supervise their students at all times. Proper supervision of students is essential, and proper supervision cannot take place when the teacher is absent from the room. Tasks which would involve leaving the room (including making copies) must be done before or after school, so please plan accordingly. Lower School teachers must alert another teacher when they take restroom breaks. Teachers should be careful when allowing students in lower grades to go to the restroom alone. Younger students and older students should not be allowed to use the restrooms at the same time.

## 1.8. Substitute Guidance

To assist a substitute in carrying out an instructional day as smoothly as possible, an up-to-date file with the following information is to be kept in a clearly marked, highly visible folder on your desk:

- Essential extensions
- Current seating chart for all your classes where applicable
- Daily schedule

- Teacher’s responsibilities (Include a copy of your carpool duties.)
- Instructions for lockdown, fire, and tornado drills
- An arrangement must be made to provide two copies of thorough, typed lesson plans and/or assignments for use by the substitute to supplement, if necessary, the plans already entered on Renweb.

## **1.9. Emergency Drills and Procedures**

- 1.9.1. Routes: Teachers should make sure the evacuation route for fire drills and the tornado procedure are posted in their classrooms.
- 1.9.2. Signals:
- Fire – repeated short blasts from fire alarm system
  - Tornado– announcement through the phone paging system
- 1.9.3. Procedures: Teachers should train and inform students of fire drill and tornado alert procedures at the beginning of the school year. All faculty and staff should have procedures memorized.
- 1.9.4. Substitutes: Teachers should train students to direct substitute teachers in the drills to avoid confusion and undue alarm.
- 1.9.5. Roll: Teachers should take roll immediately upon arrival at their class’s designated safety area.
- 1.9.6. Communication: Teachers should have cell phones with them when evacuating a classroom.

## **1.10.Serious Weather Conditions and Other School Closings**

In the event of inclement weather, school closings will be announced on ABC Channel 33/40 television. If at all possible, announcements will be made via mass email, calling post, and/or our website and Facebook page. In the event of early dismissal (e.g., because of weather), parents will be notified via email and telephone.

Please know that we will do our best to notify you of school closings in a timely manner. However, it is possible that because of conditions beyond our control (e.g., power outage), one or all of these means may be inaccessible either to us or to you.

## **1.11. Upper School Specifics – Tutorials and Advisors**

1.11.1 The Westminster tutorial and advisor programs are driven by our passion for students to grow in their ability to think, to learn, and to love. The tutorials and advisor program are opportunities for us to demonstrate our conviction that we will not wait for or expect students to come to us for guidance. We will go to them as Christ came to us.

1.11.2 While it is the role of every teacher to advise every student, being intentional with advisees will guarantee that every student has an advocate and a guide focusing on his or her particular needs. Students should receive the following from their advisor:

1. A quarterly meeting with their advisee group for voicing common concerns and discussing academic life
2. An individual mid-term conversation to help them understand where they are at mid-term
3. A narrative sent to parents describing academic and spiritual development at the end of first quarter

## 2. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: GRADING

### 2.1. Percentages and Grade Equivalent

#### 2.1.1. Scale

<i>Scale for Number Grades</i>		<i>Scale for Letter Grades</i>	
90-100	A	Excellent	E
80-89	B	Satisfactory	S
70-79	C	Needs Improvement	N
69 and below	F	Unsatisfactory	U

A sufficient number of grades per nine-week quarter should be given for each subject so that any one grade does not carry too much weight. Adequate documentation of grades must be recorded in RenWeb.

- 2.1.2. Partial Credit: In any subject where appropriate (e.g., math, Latin), partial credit is encouraged. Students should be required to show their work in all math problems.
- 2.1.3. Late or Incomplete Work: Students will generally be penalized for late work, and assignments that are not turned in will earn a zero.
- 2.1.4. Curving: Grades should not be curved or inflated.
- 2.1.5. Saving Tests: Teachers should collect all tests that are used every year (e.g., Saxon math tests, Shurley grammar tests).
- 2.1.6. Turn-Around Time (for returning students' graded work): Teachers should grade and return all work in a timely manner with appropriate feedback. Under normal circumstances all work should be returned within a week. Major projects and formal essays may take up to two weeks to grade and return.
- 2.1.7. Poor Class Performance: Teachers are to notify their supervisor if a majority of the students in a class do poorly on a test or assignment.
- 2.1.8. Retests: Do not retest an individual student (exception as noted in Section 3.3.2).
- 2.1.9. Standards: Teachers should use objective standards to judge student performance.
- 2.1.10. Quarter Grades: These should include, but are not limited to, the following areas and should be recorded in the teacher's grade book:
- Tests
  - Quizzes
  - Homework / Class work
  - Written / Oral reports
  - Projects

- 2.1.11. Discussions: Participation in class discussions may be graded. If so, grades for daily participation should be recorded on a consistent basis. Objective criteria for grading participation should be approved by supervisor.
- 2.1.12. Variety: There should exist a variety in the amount and kind of testing, assignments, and homework is strongly encouraged.
- 2.1.13. Carry-Over: Teachers should grade, record, and average all tests and other assignments given during a quarter for that nine-week grading period. Only carry over a grade to the next quarter if you inform the students in advance that it will be included in the next grading period.
- 2.1.14. Major Projects/Papers: (Upper School) All projects and major papers assigned during the second and fourth quarters should generally be due at least one week prior to the beginning of semester exam week.

## **2.2. Semester Exams for Grades 7-12**

- 2.2.1. Exams: Cumulative exams will be administered to students in grades 7-12 at the end of each semester.
- 2.2.2. Review: Teachers will provide a review sheet for the students before the exam week, and at least one entire class period will be used for exam preparation.

## **2.3. Testing Guidelines**

- 2.3.1. Variety: Some variety in the type of test format and questions is encouraged.
- 2.3.2. Notice: All tests should be announced at least three days in advance.
- 2.3.3. Comments: Teachers should make a habit of writing encouraging comments/notes on students' papers. Feedback on classroom assessments should provide students with a clear picture of their progress in learning goals and how they might improve.
- 2.3.4. Review Material: Students should be apprised of any review material that will be covered on a test.
- 2.3.5. Scheduling: Upper School faculty should record tests and major projects on the Upper School test calendar.
- 2.3.6. Piling On: More than two tests or major projects should not be due on the same day.

### **3. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING: CURRICULUM**

#### **3.1. Memorization of Familiar Works**

The memorization of poetry, hymns and songs, famous speeches, and wise sayings should be an integral part of the curriculum.

#### **3.2. Cursive Handwriting**

Students in grades 3-6 should write in cursive or type all formal writing assignments. Students are not required to write in cursive on homework assignments or when writing rough drafts.

Teachers in grades 4-6 should encourage neat cursive handwriting by regularly giving students a penmanship grade on written assignments. Students will normally be informed in advance that a penmanship grade will be taken. These grades will be recorded as part of the penmanship grade.

#### **3.3. Guidelines for Accommodations**

##### 3.3.1. Examples of Appropriate Accommodations

(Basic rule of thumb: We will make accommodations for individual students, but we will not make modifications to the curriculum.)

- Seating a student where learning will be optimum. Take into consideration needs of students who have sight, hearing, or attention challenges.
- Giving a limited amount of extra time to take a test if the student will not be missing instruction in another subject.
- Giving individual attention to students while the class is doing seatwork (not taking a test).
- Giving a “memory jog” or a “reminder” to clarify a specific question on a test IF the memory jog or reminder is addressed to the class as a whole. (This should not be done on a regular basis.)
- Clarifying a test question that is confusing by reading the question out loud to the entire class.
- Reading instructions very carefully and giving individual help to make sure that every student understands what is expected before students begin to take a test.
- Communicating specific study needs to parents. (It is important that parents understand that their involvement is necessary for success.)
- Tutoring a student after class.
- Providing a hard copy of information presented on an overhead projector or on the board; however, this does not exempt a student from doing the same work as the rest of the class (e.g., making the effort to copy material from an overhead or from the board).

##### 3.3.2. Other Instructions

- If the teacher suspects that a student will have difficulty with a new concept, the teacher should tell the parent in advance so that the parent can go over the new material with the child at home before the concept is introduced in class.

- If a student has inadvertently left out a section or a question on a test, the teacher may return the test to the student to allow him to complete that section or question. However, part of the learning process is for students to learn to check their work carefully before turning it in. (At the teacher's discretion, full or partial credit may be given.)
- In rare circumstances, the teacher may allow a student to retake a test if the student's performance is not consistent with the usual caliber of his work and seems indicative of an unusual problem/issue.

### 3.3.3. Examples of Accommodation That Are Not Deemed Appropriate

- Asking a student being tutored the actual questions that will be on a test that have not been reviewed in the same way during class for the class as a whole.
- Giving further instruction or help on a completed assignment.
- Allowing a student with test anxiety or attention challenges to routinely take tests at a different time or in a different place from the rest of the class. One of our goals is to help each student learn how to take tests independently in a classroom setting.

**Note: In all cases, grading must be equal for everyone.**

## 3.4. Homework Philosophy and Guidelines

### 3.4.1. Philosophy: The purposes of homework are review, practice, and preparation.

- Review – Assignments intended to help students study for tests or refresh cumulative skills (e.g., vocabulary, math calculations)
- Practice – Assignments intended to help students repeat and reinforce skills learned in class
- Preparation – Assignments intended to extend material learned in class, introduce material for the next class, or challenge the students on information learned (e.g., reading assignments to be discussed in class, logic problem to stretch a given point)

### 3.4.2. Guidelines

#### Lower School

- No homework should be assigned over holidays and vacations.
- No homework should be assigned on weekends. However, students can be encouraged to use weekend time for outside projects or long-term assignments.
- Teachers should communicate the purpose and expectations of each homework assignment.
- Teachers should record and update assignments on RenWeb.
- Students in grades 3-5 should generally have less homework on long days.

#### Grades 7 and 8

- Upper School teachers should have each student record homework assignments in his student planner.
- Upper School teachers should record major assignments (projects, papers, tests) on the Upper School Test Calendar.

- Upper School faculty should be in communication with one another regarding homework assignments to avoid overly heavy homework loads.
- Weekend homework must be limited to assigned reading for literature.
- Quizzes and tests should not be given on Monday. (Exception: If students are not prepared for a test or quiz scheduled for Friday, it may be given the following Monday.)
- Homework may not be given over holidays.

Grades 9-12

- Upper School teachers should suggest students record homework assignments in a student planner.
- Upper School teachers should record major assignments (projects, papers, tests) on the Upper School Test Calendar.
- Upper School faculty should be in communication with one another regarding homework assignments to avoid overly heavy homework loads.
- Homework may not be given over holidays.

General

- Though time spent on homework will vary from student to student, teachers should use the following as a guide for the average student:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Approximate Time Per Night</b>
K	Up to 20 minutes
1-2	Up to 40 minutes
3-4	Up to 45 minutes
5-6	Up to 60 minutes
7-8	Up to 20 minutes per class
9-12	Up to 30 minutes per class

3.4.3. Parent Communication

- Parents are encouraged to talk with the classroom teacher if they believe the homework load is inappropriate for their child. The teacher should carefully weigh their comments and make changes if appropriate.
- If a teacher has concerns about parents’ comments regarding homework (or other matters), he is to be proactive in discussing these concerns with an administrator.

**3.5. Video Use**

- 3.5.1. Standard: All videos used in class should conform to the principles listed in Philippians 4:8.

- 3.5.2. Approval: The teacher must preview all videos. The teacher should receive approval from an administrator before showing any video.
- 3.5.3. Purposes: Videos may be for educational purposes only and should be used sparingly. Educational videos include historical, documentary, and literary videos.
- 3.5.4. Equipment: We have TV/VCR/DVDs available for use. Reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis through the receptionist for the TVs in the main building. The TVs in the modulars are not to be removed from their assigned buildings. We also have LCD projectors available for use. They may be reserved through the receptionist on a first-come, first-served basis. Each teacher is responsible for returning the equipment to the proper location after each use.

### 3.6. Controversial Subjects

- 3.6.1. Definition: A controversial subject is a subject which Christian families and churches commonly consider divisive or very sensitive, whether or not the introduction of the topic was planned by the teacher or brought up by a student (e.g., environmentalism, old earth/young earth, partisan politics).
- 3.6.2. Guidelines: If in the course of teaching a subject arises which the teacher has good reason to believe is controversial or of a sensitive nature and the discussion of which will not help achieve the goals for that class, the teacher will not allow any class time for discussion of said subject.

If such a subject arises and the teacher has reason to believe discussion of the subject *will* help achieve the goals of the class, the teacher will do the following:

- As necessary, instruct the class on the responsibility of Christians to be charitable when there are differing points of view.
- Instruct the students regarding their responsibility to honor the teaching they have received from their parents on the subject.
- As appropriate, direct students' attention to informed sources on each side of the subject. This may be done in a variety of ways (e.g., guest speakers, different authors, assigned research paper). Strongly encourage students to become knowledgeable regarding the most widely held view on the topic.
- Refrain from pursuing tangents or other unplanned subject matter that will lead to a possible mishandling or poor teaching of controversial subjects.

The teacher is to remember that, according to Scripture, he is serving as a role model of a mature Christian adult to the students. As such, teachers are never to enter into a contentious debate with students on controversial subjects in a classroom setting. Even though the teacher may hold strong personal convictions regarding the subject, in light of these guidelines and sound teaching practice, he is to encourage a gracious and scholarly attitude in the students.

### 3.7. Guest Speakers

- 3.7.1. Approval: All guest speakers must receive prior approval by an administrator before they are asked to speak. Teachers should get approval from the principal or dean of faculty at least one week in advance.
- 3.7.2. Criteria: Guest speakers should be considered only when they have expertise in an area directly related to the current unit of study in a particular subject

### 3.8. Field Trips

#### 3.8.1. Teacher Guidelines

- Field trips should enhance the current topic of study. They should be of sound educational benefit and easily tied to the particular subject or topic of study.
- Teachers must submit a Field Trip Request form to an administrator at least two weeks prior to the trip. Do not make reservations until the trip has been approved.
- When a field trip has been approved, make sure a copy of the Field Trip Request form is given to the school office to record the event on the master calendar.
- Teachers should have an informational letter for the field trip approved and sent home prior to the field trip. Part of this letter should include a permission slip to be returned in order for the child to participate in the field trip.
- If a Westminster check is needed for a field trip, teachers should give a written request (blue form) to the office at least one week prior to the trip. Checks will be written on Fridays only.
- Teachers must provide a list of chaperones and drivers with all their cell phone numbers to the school office on the day of the trip. Students are not allowed to drive on field trips.
- First-aid kits are available for check-out in the school office.

#### 3.8.2. General Guidelines

- Every driver and parent chaperone should receive a copy of these guidelines before the day of the field trip.
- Regular dress code must be followed on all field trips unless otherwise specified.
- Drivers and chaperones will meet as a group before leaving the school. They will be assigned a specific group of students who will be under their authority and supervision for the entire trip. However, both chaperones and students are under the authority of the teacher. Please use the classroom or the gym rather than the school/church lobby to organize students.
- Seat one child per seat belt. Do not double up students in seat belts.

- The driver/chaperone should be certain every child is seated and belted inside the vehicle before entering the vehicle himself. Upon arrival at the destination or return to the school, the students should wait inside the vehicle until an adult outside the vehicle is ready to receive them.
- Classroom behavior expectations apply during the entire field trip, including in the vehicles. The driver/chaperone should require students to be obedient. Students should be seated and not talking above a normal speaking voice inside the vehicle.
- No personal electronic devices are allowed on field trips.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that chaperones are aware of their responsibilities while on the field trip. Please ask that no parents make stops for lunch/treats along the way unless planned by teachers for the entire group.
- Upon arrival at the field trip site, students should remain with their chaperones.

## 4. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

### 4.1. Back-to-School Open House

At the beginning of each school year, a night is scheduled for parents to visit the school, meet the teachers, and hear a brief overview of what is expected of their child. After a general meeting with all parents, faculty, and administration, parents will visit the classrooms. Because of the brevity of these meetings, it is imperative that each teacher be prepared to go over the following information **concisely**:

- Introduction of self and background
- General objectives for the year
- Textbooks to be used
- Grading policy
- Explanation of what is meant by *cumulative* testing
- Availability for conferences
- Optional handouts with course objectives/goals or other pertinent information

Parents have delegated to us the responsibility of partnering with them in the education of their children. It is important that teachers convey an understanding of and commitment to this task.

This is not a time for parent conferences. Parents should be told they are welcome to schedule a conference if they need additional time for specific questions or concerns..

### 4.2. School Support Network (SSN)

Teachers are to be thoroughly familiar with the SSN in order to fully understand how the greatest number of parents can be involved in the life of the school.

### 4.3. Classroom Help

4.3.1. Parents are encouraged to assist in the classroom for specific activities under teacher supervision, such as the following:

- Drive or chaperone for field trips
- Sign up to read to the class, according to your schedule
- Assist with gathering supplies for science projects
- Assist with science projects, art projects, and other class activities
- Pray for the teacher and the class
- Organize class parties

4.3.2. Teachers should ensure the room mother or the mother in charge of an activity involves a variety of classroom parents (instead of asking the same parents all the time).

### 4.4. Guidelines and Tips for Lower School Parent Conferences

4.4.1. All conferences with parents should be prescheduled. At the end of the conference, a parent-teacher conference form should be filled out and kept on file for future reference. If concerns are raised during a parent conference, please keep the principal informed.

- 4.4.2. Set a time limit for the conference. Let parents know this at the beginning of the conference so they, as well as you, are mindful of the time. If it looks like more time will be needed, schedule another conference when you will have adequate time.
- 4.4.3. Request that both parents attend the conference. Fathers and mothers see things differently and often balance one another.
- 4.4.4. Be prepared for the conference. Know what you intend to cover, but allow time for some questions. Have a folder of the student's materials to illustrate your points. If a known problem is going to be addressed, have possible solutions or suggestions prepared.
- 4.4.5. Begin positively by sharing aspects of the child you especially enjoy.
- 4.4.6. Begin and/or end the conference with prayer.
- 4.4.7. Be positive, especially in the case of a student with special problems. Enlist the parents' help and ideas on ways to improve the situation. For example, a good question is "What do you do at home about...?" Seek more ways for the home and school to complement one another.
- 4.4.8. Be direct! Do not beat around the bush. If you have a concern or question, state it plainly.
- 4.4.9. Be as concrete as possible in your references by having samples of the student's work or similar examples to show the parents. (Keep a file of samples of tests and class work for each student. If there is anything in the file that you do not want a parent to ask for at the end of the year, keep it in a separate file.)
- 4.4.10. Do not use diagnostic terms in discussing a child's behavior (e.g., "attention deficit," "hyperactive," "depressed").
- 4.4.11. Sit with the parents rather than behind your desk. It helps open up communication if you are sharing "equally." Talk to both parents. The tendency is to talk to the mother or to let her do all the talking. Ask the father specific questions, especially about discipline.
- 4.4.12. Stay on the point. Do not go off on tangents. Without being rude, minimize time spent on pleasantries.
- 4.4.13. Listen carefully to parents! They may say a lot without saying much, and it can help you understand their child better.
- 4.4.14. Ask open-ended questions whenever possible.
- 4.4.15. Take notes during the conference, recording any action or objectives. Be sure to follow up and reference these specifics at the next conference, and describe any action taken.
- 4.4.16. Follow up on any concerns or questions that will take some research on your part. Check with the principal on any policy-related or confusing issue raised during the conference.

- 4.4.17. Never get into a discussion of another student or teacher during a conference even if the comments are positive! Parents talk among themselves, and it is very easy to cause unintentional offense through secondhand conversations.

#### **4.5. Guidelines for Lower School Parent-Teacher Communication**

- 4.5.1. Although we do not have days set aside on the school calendar for parent conferences, all teachers are required to communicate with parents on a regular basis.
- 4.5.2. The best way to communicate with parents regarding your class in general is by sending home a weekly memo or newsletter with as much detail as possible.
- 4.5.3. The best way to communicate with parents regarding their child in particular is by telephone or a scheduled conference rather than by written notes.
- 4.5.4. At some point during the first quarter of school, either formally or informally, talk with each of your students' parents either by telephone or scheduled conference and let them know how their child is doing. Your first contacts should be with the parents of students who are new to the school. Parents want to know if their children are cooperative, if they are making friends in the class, etc. Tell parents something you particularly enjoy about their child before you tell them areas that need improvement.
- 4.5.5. Contact parents whenever a student's grade drops below passing or whenever a student receives an F on an assignment.

## **5. DISCIPLINE**

Our goal at WESTMINSTER is to develop godly character in our students by teaching them to discern right from wrong and to practice self-control in ways that honor God. The entire curriculum strives to reveal our holy, righteous, and gracious God in ways that encourage children to love and honor their heavenly Father so that they will accept His correction just as children who love and honor their earthly fathers accept their correction. Teaching self-control includes encouraging children to learn biblical ways to talk to one another, to play with one another, to support and encourage one another, to handle disagreements, to receive correction, and to express emotions. Additionally, we are eager for children to learn responsibility regarding their own and others' possessions and toward nature as they fulfill God's creation mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth.

### **5.1. Guidelines**

- 5.1.1. Students should remain quiet in the hallways and in the restrooms.
- 5.1.2. When classes are walking from one area to another, lower school students are to walk in line with their classmates and stay to the right-hand side of the hallways and stairwells.
- 5.1.3. Students should show love and respect for each other (including students in other classes) both in the building and on the playground.
- 5.1.4. Students should keep their hands to themselves while walking down the hall. They should not touch the walls or other students.
- 5.1.5. Students in older classes should always give the right-of-way to younger students in the hallways and in the stairwells.
- 5.1.6. Classes should walk around, not through, the play areas of other students during recess, especially when organized games are in progress.
- 5.1.7. Older students should be taught to be responsible for younger students and to set a good example.

Response to a student's problem behavior, in kind and amount, will be determined by his/her teacher and, if necessary, the principal. Applications of discipline will be based on biblical principles including restitution, apologies (public and private), swift/painful chastisement, restoration of fellowship, and dealing with lingering sinful attitudes. The vast majority of these problems will be dealt with at the classroom level. To maintain consistency, teachers will meet regularly to discuss biblical standards and school policy concerning these aspects of discipline.

### **5.2. Suggestions for Classroom Discipline**

- A. Establish classroom procedures, and teach them to your students.
  1. How do you expect students to line up?
  2. How do you expect students to transition from one activity to another?
  3. How do you expect students to work together in groups?
  4. When may students talk, and when should they not talk?

- B. Teach your students that you expect obedience.
1. Explain the biblical basis for obedience.
  2. Teach the relationship between obedience and submission.
  3. Check for understanding.
- C. Explain what disciplinary action (consequences) students can expect when they do not obey.
1. Teach students that disobedience is a *choice* and that the consequence of disobedience is disciplinary action.
  2. Teach students that the goal of discipline is first a change of heart, to be followed by a change in behavior, always ensuring that the sinful attitudes behind the behavior are being addressed.
  3. Provide opportunities to train students regarding classroom expectations and rules before imposing consequences for disobedience.
  4. Check for understanding.
- D. Establish a discipline hierarchy.
1. Start with a warning as a reminder that the student is choosing to disobey.
  2. The second time a student disrupts, mete out the prescribed disciplinary action.
  3. The discipline should be appropriate for the age of the student.

### 5.3. Lower School Discipline Procedure

- 5.3.1. Each teacher should have a written classroom behavior policy that is communicated clearly to both students and parents. Consistency in following the policies will take care of the vast majority of discipline issues that arise in the classroom. However, some discipline problems that necessitate the principal's involvement. These include but are not limited to:
- Lying
  - Cheating
  - Stealing
  - Fighting
  - Deliberately harming another student
  - Destroying property
  - Refusing to obey
  - Using weapons or other dangerous items
- 5.3.2. Westminster standards for student behavior are quite high. The goal of all discipline is Christ-likeness, and all discipline should be exercised in a spirit of grace and compassion. Parental responsibility and cooperation in disciplinary matters are expected and strongly emphasized.
- 5.3.2.1. The first two times a student is sent to an administrator for discipline, his/her parents will be contacted and apprised of the details of the visit. Possible disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to, restitution, janitorial work,

parental attendance during the school day, or spanking. If corporal punishment seems warranted, the administrator will act only in concert with the parents.

- 5.3.2.2. The third office visit will be followed by a meeting of the student's parents and an administrator.
- 5.3.2.3. Should the student require a fourth visit, a two-day suspension or other measures deemed appropriate may be imposed. Credit for work missed will not be allowed.
- 5.3.2.4. A fifth visit may result in expulsion.

#### **5.4. Upper School Discipline Procedure**

- 5.4.1. Faculty members are expected to maintain discipline in the classroom and may issue warnings, referrals, and other forms of discipline.
  - 5.4.2. After accumulating three referrals, students will be given a detention, which will be held on Friday after school for one hour.
  - 5.4.3. When detentions are issued, parents are to be informed.
  - 5.4.4. Multiple detentions may result in suspension or expulsion.
  - 5.4.5. Faculty members will refer consistent or extreme discipline problems to the Dean of Students or Head of School, who may administer a suspension. Such discipline problems might include:
    - Lying
    - Cheating (including plagiarism)
    - Stealing
    - Fighting
    - Destroying property
    - Using weapons or other dangerous items
- 1.1.1. Egregiously harmful or disruptive behavior by a student may cause the normal disciplinary steps to be superseded and may result in either suspension or expulsion.
  - 1.1.2. Suspensions will carry an automatic academic penalty of two points per day subtracted from the final semester grade.
  - 1.1.3. All serious discipline issues are subject to being recorded on a student's permanent transcript and could seriously impact college admissions.

## 5.5. Obedience and Submission

“Obedience is the willing submission of one person to the authority of another. It means more than a child doing what he is told. It means doing what he is told – without challenge, without excuse, without delay. Often submission means doing what he doesn’t want to do, at least what he doesn’t want to do at that moment.”

(from *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, Tedd Tripp)

## 5.6. Consequences

When students understand that their behavior is their choice, they must be taught that when they do not obey, they are choosing to receive consequences. The teacher is placing responsibility where it belongs, on the student. Remember – **choice** is the key word. Consequences are actions students know will occur when they make wrong choices. Consequences must be seen as natural outcomes of inappropriate behavior, and all behavior must be seen as linked to some attitude of the heart.

Consequences do not have to be severe to be effective. The key to effective consequences is that they are used consistently. It is the inevitability of the consequence, not the severity, which makes it effective. Minimal consequences, such as five minutes working away from the group, can be as effective as after-school detentions when they are given consistently. Consequences must be something students do not like, but they must never be physically or psychologically harmful.

If we only structure our school around rules, we will produce children who learn to keep the rules. They will become smug and self-righteous. We want to help our students develop character. We want them to learn dependability, honesty, kindness, consideration, helpfulness, diligence, loyalty, humility, self-control, moral purity, and a host of other character qualities. Addressing the child’s character places the emphasis on issues of the heart. It enables us to get underneath behavior and address the thoughts, motives, and purposes of the heart.

“The heart determines behavior. Learn, therefore, to work back from behavior to the heart. Expose heart struggles. Help your [students] see that they were made for a relationship with God. The thirst of the heart can be satisfied in truly knowing God.

“Since the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, you must set such a worldview before your [students]. You must help them learn that only in Him will they find themselves.”

“If you only try to change behavior, you are missing the real issue – [the] heart. If you can successfully address the real issue, the behavior problem will be solved.

“If you address only behavior in [your students], you never get to the cross of Christ. It is impossible to get from preoccupation with behavior to the gospel. The gospel is not a message about doing new things. It is a message about being a new creature.”

(from *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, Tedd Tripp)

## **6. OFFICE GUIDELINES**

### **6.1. Cumulative Records**

- 6.1.1. “Cum” files for all new students (including kindergarten students) will be prepared by the office. The cum files are located in the Director of Operations’ office. These files contain confidential information of many types on every student currently enrolled, as well as on most former students.
- 6.1.2. These files are to be used for your information. However, because of their highly personal and confidential nature, please observe the following guidelines:
  - Do not take cum files from the office except with specific permission of an administrator.
  - Do not share the contents of a cum file with anyone without approval from the principal or dean.
  - Cum files may not be taken out of the building by any teacher for any reason.

### **6.2. Accident Reports**

If one of your students is seriously injured during the school day and the injury requires or has the potential to require medical attention, fill out an accident report form before you leave school, and make copies for the parent and the principal.

### **6.3. Purchase of and Reimbursement for School Supplies**

All purchases of curriculum materials, resource materials for your classroom, and classroom supplies should be approved in advance. The budget provides reasonable but limited funds for classroom materials and supplies as well as for curriculum materials. Many items are purchased in bulk at discount prices through the school office so always check with office personnel before you make individual purchases of supplies.

- 6.3.1. Use the Teacher Request form found on the S drive (S: Operations/forms and labels/Teacher Request Form).
- 6.3.2. Fill out the form completely, including item number and/or ISBN number, unit price, company name, and telephone number or website.
- 6.3.3. For accurate accounting purposes, please indicate the purpose of the purchase (e.g., consumable curriculum, non-consumable curriculum, supplies for science experiment).
- 6.3.4. Receive approval from your supervisor for the purchase, and put the form in the Director of Operations’ box.
- 6.3.5. You will be notified by the office when your order arrives.
- 6.3.6. The following procedure is to be followed if supplies are purchased with personal funds:
  - Expense reimbursement forms must be completed, signed by your supervisor, and turned in to the office. Checks will be ready on Fridays.

- Submit the form with receipts to the office within sixty days of the purchase in order to receive reimbursement. **The school will not be able to reimburse you after sixty days. All receipts for the current fiscal year must be remitted by June 30 even if fewer than sixty days from purchase.**
- We cannot guarantee reimbursement if approval was not obtained prior to the purchase.

#### 6.4. Collecting money from parents

- 6.4.1. All money going for school functions should run through the school's books. Teachers or staff members who need to collect money for activities or supplies should first receive permission from his/her supervisor. All checks should be written to Westminster and not to the individual collecting the money. Once the money has been collected, it should be turned in with a deposit slip. A check request form or employee reimbursement form can be used to receive a check for the event/items. Receipts must accompany the check request or reimbursement form.

#### 6.5. Facilities

- 6.5.1. A standard Calendar Entry and Building Usage Request form should be turned in to the receptionist when a room is needed for special events or when an event (such as a field trip) needs to be placed on the calendar. Teachers and staff are not to go directly to the church staff with facilities requests.
- 6.5.2. Please report any maintenance need via **email** to [maintenance@westminsterknights.org](mailto:maintenance@westminsterknights.org). Type “work request” and your room number on the subject line. For emergencies (e.g., an overflowing toilet), send a student to the office with a note. Please do not go directly to the church administrator or facilities staff with repair requests.
- 6.5.3. Inform the office immediately if something in the classroom is broken or removed.

#### 6.6. Labor Laws

Alabama and Federal Labor Law Posters are displayed in both the school and church mail rooms.

#### 6.7. Computers/Technology

Westminster School (and, at times, Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church) provides various technology resources to authorized employees to assist them in performing their job duties. Each employee has a responsibility to use these resources in a manner that honors Christ, increases productivity, enhances Westminster’s public image, and respects other employees. Failure to follow these policies may lead to a loss of certain technology privileges.

### 6.7.1 Technology Resource Definition

Technology resources consist of all electrical devices, software, and means of electronic communication including, but not limited to, the following: personal computers and work stations, laptop computers; computer hardware such as disk drives; peripheral equipment such as printers, modems, fax machines, copiers, computer software applications, and associated files and data (including software that grants access to external services, such as the Internet, email, telephones, and voice mail systems).

### 6.7.2.1 Who Can Use Westminster/OMPC Technical Resources?

6.7.2.1.1 Computers –Students are not allowed to use the copiers or any school computer, with the exception of the yearbook computers which can only be used by yearbook staff when a teacher is present. Teachers' computers should have the screen saver password-protected to ensure that students cannot access a computer when the teacher is away from the classroom.

6.7.2.1.2 Copiers/Printers – Network copiers and printers are provided by OMPC for the use of Westminster staff. Please do not share your copy code with others. The copiers/printers are not available for student or non-staff use.

6.7.2.1.3 Telephones – Student use of Westminster/OMPC phones should be limited to essential calls only. For example, a student may call home if he forgot his lunch; but he should not be allowed to call home if he wants to go home with a friend that afternoon.

6.7.2.1.4 Wireless – Westminster provides wireless connections on most hallways. The wireless is for the use of Westminster staff only. Staff should not share the wireless access code with students, church staff, church members (including elders and deacons), or others visiting the school or church. Violations could result in the loss of wireless for the whole school.

6.7.2.2 Tech Support Only the Westminster/OMPC IT staff should be asked to provide tech support on a school-owned computer. Please do not ask friends, students, or anyone else to help with a problem.

### 6.7.2.3 Improper Use

6.7.2.3.1 Harassing, discriminatory, and defamatory language: Westminster and OMPC are aware that employees use email for informal correspondence; however, employees must take care not to let informality degenerate into improper use.

6.7.2.3.2 Copyright violation: Employees must not use Westminster/OMPC technical resources to copy, retrieve, forward, or send copyrighted materials unless the employee has the author's permission or is accessing a single copy only for the employee's reference.

6.7.2.3.3 Other prohibited uses: Employees may not use any of Westminster/OMPC's technology resources for any illegal purpose or violation of any company policy in a manner contrary to the best interest of Westminster/OMPC or for personal or pecuniary gain.

- 6.7.2.4 Streaming – At times it is necessary to stream audio or video for the purpose of classroom instruction. Westminster/OMPC IT staff will monitor streaming to ensure that there is no drain on the server. Please do not stream music, movies, videos, etc. unless it is for instructional use.
- 6.7.2.5 Company access to technology resources – All messages sent and received, including personal messages and all data information stored on Westminster/OMPC’s email system, voicemail system, or computer systems are Westminster/OMPC property, regardless of the content. As such, Westminster/OMPC reserves the right to access all of its technology resources, including its computers, voicemail, and email systems, at any time, at its sole discretion.
- 6.7.2.6 Privacy – Although Westminster/OMPC does not wish to examine personal information of its employees, on occasion, Westminster/OMPC may need to access its technology resources, including computer files, email messages, and voice mail messages. Employees should understand, therefore, that they have no right of privacy with respect to any messages or information created or maintained on Westminster/OMPC’s technology resources, including personal information or messages. Westminster/OMPC may, at its discretion, inspect all files or messages on its technology resources at any time in order to determine compliance with its policies, for purposes of legal proceedings, to investigate misconduct, to locate information, or for any other business purpose. Personal information may be deleted or removed by Westminster/OMPC without permission of the owner if deemed necessary.
- 6.7.2.7 Passwords – Certain Westminster/OMPC technology resources can be accessed only by entering a password. Passwords are intended to prevent unauthorized access to information. Passwords do not confer any right of privacy upon any employee of Westminster/OMPC. Thus, even though employees may maintain passwords for accessing technology resources, employees must not expect that any information, including email and voicemail messages, are private. Employees are expected to maintain their passwords as confidential. Employees must not share passwords and must not access coworkers’ systems without express authorization.

## 6.8. Copies

Teachers are responsible for making their own copies. When available, the office will arrange for a volunteer. The office is available to make copies during the day for special circumstances (e.g., need one more copy of a test). However, the office will not be able to assist with copies between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning.

## 6.9. Copyright Guidelines (avoiding the copyright police)

**Fair use:** “The privilege of someone other than the owner of the copyrighted material to use the latter in a reasonable manner without consent” (*West’s Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary*, West Publishing, 1985, p. 310)

## Personal Research Copying Guidelines

- A. Instructors may make a single copy of any of the following for scholarly research or use in teaching or preparing to teach:
  - 1. Chapter from a book
  - 2. Article from a periodical or newspaper
  - 3. Short story, essay, or short poem
  - 4. Chart, diagram, graph, drawing, cartoon, or picture from a book, periodical, or newspaper
  
- B. Multiple copies (not to exceed one copy per pupil in a course) may be made by the teacher for classroom use or discussion provided that:
  - 1. Copying meets the tests of brevity and spontaneity.
  - 2. Copying meets the cumulative effect test.
  - 3. Each copy includes a notice of copyright.
  
- C. Copying that meets these tests is permissible.
  - 1. Brevity
    - a. Poetry – fewer than 250 words
    - b. Prose – fewer than 2500 words, or an excerpt of not more than 1000 words *or* 10% of the work, whichever is less
    - c. Illustration – one chart, graph, diagram, drawing, cartoon, or picture per book or periodical
  - 2. Spontaneity
    - a. Inspiration of the teacher
    - b. Maximum teaching effectiveness leaving no time to request permission
  - 3. Cumulative effect
    - a. Copying of the material is for only one course.
    - b. Copying does not exceed one short poem, article, story, or essay; or two excerpts from the same author; or more than three of these from the same collection, periodical, or volume during one class term.
    - c. There are no more than nine instances of copying for one course during a semester.
  
- D. Violations to guidelines
  - 1. Copying shall not be used to create, replace, or substitute for anthologies, compilations, or collected works.
  - 2. There shall be no copying of works intended to be consumable (e.g., workbooks, exercises, test booklets).
  - 3. Copying shall not accomplish any of the following:
    - a. Substitute for the purchase of books or periodicals.
    - b. Be directed by a higher authority.
    - c. Be repeated (the same item by the same teacher from term to term).
    - d. Be charged to the student beyond the actual cost of the copies.
  
- E. Suggestions
  - 1. Put materials on reserve at the library.
    - a. This functions as an extension of classroom readings.
    - b. The burden of copyright compliance falls to the student and his personal research.

2. Obtain permission.
  - a. Contact the publisher.
    - 1) Locate information in the front of the publication.
    - 2) Call the library for publisher address or phone number.
  - b. Contact: Copyright Clearance Center Academic Permissions Service  
222 Rosewood Drive  
Danvers, MA 01923  
(508) 750-8400
  - c. <http://www.directory.net/copyright/>

F. Internet and Copyright / Fair Use Guidelines

1. Apply the same fair use guidelines to the internet as you would to print materials.
2. An author, in fixing his ideas in a medium, establishes copyright for that material. Official copyright registration is not required.

**When in doubt, get permission or put material on reserve.**

## **7.0 SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF FACULTY**

1. All teachers, full- or part-time, are to receive a written, formal evaluation at least once each year. All evaluations are confidential. During the year, the administrative staff may carry out a variety of informal supervision activities with individual teachers. These activities may include, but not be limited to, classroom observations, conferences, and teacher training. All such activities are intended to strengthen the teacher.
2. Probation: In the event that a teacher's performance is substandard, the teacher will be placed on probation for a specified period of time. The teacher will be informed of the reasons for the probation. During the probationary period, the administration will continue to assist the teacher to improve, giving regular performance feedback, while at the same time gathering data from which to make a recommendation at the conclusion of the probationary period.