



2025-2026 OPA Family Handbook

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

"Where Every Oyster Grows Its Unique Pearl!" That is the OPA motto and we do our best to make it so each and every day. By teaching, modeling, and practicing the skills needed to learn and grow alongside each other, we aim to instill in students the values of respect, patience, acceptance, generosity, perseverance, responsibility, compassion, self-control, cooperation and joy. This makes OPA a great place to be!

This handbook contains information about our philosophy, expectations, guidelines, and dates as they pertain to our school this year. Updated information will be provided through school alerts emails, class communication books and class newsletters. We hope you find this handbook useful and refer to it often throughout the year.

As communication plays such a vital role in connecting our school with families and the community, we invite you to contact the school with your questions, concerns, and suggestions. We value your input.

On behalf of the staff, we extend our best wishes for a rewarding year. Let's work together to keep our school a safe and caring place for all.

On behalf of your OPA Family, welcome to another great year of learning and growing!

Robin Legge and Kelly Hale, Your OPA Administrators

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Parents and guardians play an important role in their child's education by ensuring that the students comes to school ready and prepared for the day's learning. Attendance of each child enrolled in a public school is mandatory. Student attendance is checked each morning and each afternoon. Please ensure that your child is in class on time as late arrivals are disruptive. Recording of student attendance is a legal requirement that we must take very seriously. **To report an absence, please contact Safe Arrival or use the School Messenger app; info is on our school website . When your child is late, call them in as absent, and we will account for them in attendance once they arrive.** If you do not call in an absence, you will receive an automated message, and a call from the school if you do not respond to the automated message.

BELL TIMES

SCHOOL TIMES	
7:40	Morning Supervision Begins
7:50	First Bell- Morning routines/attendance/ announcements
8:00	Morning Classes begin
9:30 (Elementary) 10:00 (Junior High)	Recesses
11:00-11:45 and 11:45-12:30	Lunch breaks
2:45	End of classes/ Bus dismissal

BICYCLES, SCOOTERS AND SKATEBOARDS AT SCHOOL

While use of bicycles, and other conveyances, promotes a healthy, active means of travel for some students, we also recognize the need to be mindful of several safety and storage concerns posed by these items. We believe families are in the best position to determine if their children are capable and responsible for the safe handling and stowing of bicycles. However, students who fail to observe school guidelines with respect to these conveyances will not be permitted to bring them to school.

- Students must wear a helmet
- Students are required to dismount and walk bicycles, and dismount and carry scooters (folded) and skateboards once they reach the walkways or asphalt adjacent to the school
- Students are required to exercise extreme caution when sharing the walkways and asphalt with pedestrians and other students at play and are to proceed directly to the school or off the school grounds when using these conveyances
- Inline skates, scooters, and skateboards may be stored in a designated spot in the classroom
- Students are required to lock bicycles in the designated area near the staff parking lot

Families and students are reminded that the school carries no insurance to cover loss of, or damage to, personal belongings. The school and the staff accept no responsibility for the safety or the recovery of lost or stolen items.

BIRTHDAYS and PERSONAL OTHER EVENTS

Families are asked to consider circulating birthday invitation through e-mail, telephone call or FB post in order to apply care in handling all children's feelings about birthday-party inclusion. Thank you for your understanding.

BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Thanks to generous grants and continued sponsorship, we are able to offer a daily breakfast program basket for each class. This is FREE for students, consisting of items including individual servings of granola bars, fruit cups, and more.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Registration for, and inquiries about, bus schedules may be made to HRCE Transportation via phone (902-431-4723) and email (transportation@hrce.ca). There is also useful info their website (hrce.ca/transportation) and at BusPlanner (hrcetransportation.mybusplanner.ca). **Bus changes via note or phone call are not able to be accepted expect for an alternate stop on the SAME bus route**, so please be encouraged to ensure your child's pick up and drop off addresses are accurate in our database and, as necessary, arrange for an alternate to pick your

child up at school, provided they are listed on your child's registration form as someone we may release them to. ***Please also note all Pre-Primary to Grade Two students are expected to have an adult receive them at their stop or the driver will return them to the school.***

Appropriate, responsible behaviour is required of students riding the bus. A student who regularly creates an unsafe situation on the bus *may* have their bus privileges suspended. All students who ride the bus are expected to take the bus home. **It is very important to send a note or call the school if your child is not going home on the bus;** this helps to ensure the safety of all of our children. Only students registered on our bus lists are allowed to ride the bus.

CLEAN FLOOR GUIDELINES

To show pride and respect for our school, all students, staff, and guests can contribute to cleanliness by:

- removing wet or dirty footwear at their coat racks. Students are asked to have an extra pair of indoor shoes suitable for physical education classes to wear at school
- avoid bringing gum, chips, pop, sunflower seeds, and dry noodles to school, please
- disposing of litter in garbage or recycle bins
- hanging all personal belongings on coat hooks/racks and shelves in hallway, up off floor

CLOTHING

Families of lower elementary students are encouraged to send a complete change of clothes to school, including bottom, top, socks, and underclothes, in a grocery bag within their backpack. All students are encouraged to **label** their clothes as one pair of black snow pants looks very much like another.

EARLY DEPARTURES FROM SCHOOL

Families who come to the school to pick up their child before normal dismissal time **must check in with the school office before doing so. No child should leave the school without being signed out at the office.** We have a sign-out sheet in the main office that we request you use so we may refer to it during dismissal. Please note that all students must have a note if someone other than parents/guardians is going to be picking up a student at the end of day.

EMERGENCY CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS

At times the Regional Centre may make a decision to close school due to poor weather conditions, storms, plumbing difficulties, or electrical failures. If weather conditions are such that school may be closed, please listen to the radio for the announcement. The Regional Centre may close the entire system or just by school "feeder" areas. We feed into the **"Eastern Shore Family of Schools"** and are part of "the former Halifax County school system".

In the event of a school closure during the day, it is less stressful for **your child if they know your emergency plan.** Please make certain that this plan does not include phoning out, as it is difficult for students and teachers to get to a telephone at these times. Parents/Guardians will be notified, at first via email and then, if we do not hear a reply from you, via phone, regarding a unexpected need to close the school prior to the dismissal of students; please keep phone numbers updated at all times. Some mornings the school busses may be cancelled, sometimes on our back roads only, but the school is open; please be aware that **families are responsible for student transportation to and from school on these days and may make the decision to keep children home that day if they wish.** Closures that are called during the day will be announced on the radio and the HRCE website. **Please do not call the school to see if school is cancelled and know school administrators do not have the authority to cancel or close schools.**

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

It is essential that the school has home and work phone numbers for families and caregivers. In addition, we must also have an emergency number, separate from the home and work numbers. If changes in any of the numbers occur or should a new emergency contact person be designated, please inform the school **immediately. Students are permitted to phone only those people noted on their registration forms.**

FIRE DRILLS/LOCKDOWN/'HOLD AND SECURE' DRILLS

Teachers review fire, lockdown and 'hold and secure' procedures with the students regularly, as we are required to conduct these drills during the school year. Staff supports students to learn these routines, feel comfortable with them, and experience success!

GUIDANCE SERVICES

OPA has a school counselor, who is available to students and families by appointment and/or referral to the school's team by their teacher or family. The counselor provides support in the areas of social-emotional learning including self-awareness and self-management; relationship skills and social awareness; responsible decision-making and conflict resolution, as well as issues of a private, personal nature. All information shared with the counselor is confidential except when the student's safety or the safety of others is at risk. The counselor is also available to lend support to families on an as needs basis by appointment.

HEAD LICE PROCEDURES

Head lice are a common condition that can affect anyone. Families are encouraged to check their child for head lice regularly and notify the school if, indeed, head lice are discovered. To minimize time missed from school, students may return to school **after the first treatment is completed** (refer to Public Health's website, "Guidelines for Treatment of Head Lice" at www.cdha.nshealth.ca). Confidentiality will be respected at all times. The HRCE Head Lice Guidelines are available at: https://www.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/head_lice_guidelines.pdf.

HOME AND SCHOOL

The Home and School is a volunteer group working in cooperation with the administration, teachers and School Advisory Council (SAC) for the benefit of all students. The group organizes fundraisers and community events throughout the year to support the costs associated with field trips, presenters and other expenses not otherwise covered by our Provincial funding. This group is open to, and welcomes, all interested families and teachers. Meeting dates will be noted via email to those who express interest in participating in this group.

LIBRARY

OPA boasts a well-stocked, well-loved library, providing students with a wealth of information and recreational reading materials. The library has an automated catalogue, internet access, books and magazines. Students are provided the opportunity to visit the school library one day per week with their class, where they may borrow books and engage in research.

LIFE-THREATENING ALLERGIES

OPA has students with life-threatening allergies. For this reason, peanuts, tree nuts and any food items containing these are **STRONGLY** discouraged. That said, we also ask for your partnership in discouraging children from engaging in food exchanges at recess and lunchtime in order to avoid any unfortunate dietary risks.

LOST AND FOUND

Whenever in the school, please check the lost and found areas. *All unclaimed items are sent to a charity during the year on the last day before Christmas, March and summer breaks.*

MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL

Students requiring medication at school must have proper documentation on file in the school office. A form must be completed each year by the parent/guardian (contact the office) so we have current medical information in the office. Teachers cannot dispense medication. Over the counter drugs must also follow this procedure. All medications are kept locked in the office and is given to the student by appropriate school personnel when required. Students are not to be given any medication to bring to school to be taken on their own. (Ex: Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.). Students are encouraged, by Policy, to keep their epipens with them, unless a waiver is signed (please contact the office for this) by their parent/guardian stating otherwise.

NO CHILD WITHOUT

The MedicAlert No Child Without program exists thanks to the generosity of our donors, the Lions Club of Canada and the Government of Canada. If your child would benefit from a customized medical bracelets and necklaces,

and is ages 4 to 14, please contact the *No Child Without*® program at ncw@medicalert.ca or 1.877.282.5378 for more information.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONCERNS

Parents/guardians are requested to respect the following process if they have concerns about classroom or school matters: (1) speak with your child's teacher if your concern has to do with the classroom; (2) speak with the Principal if your concern is not resolved or if you have a concern about the running of the school; (3) use the "Parent Concern Protocol Form" available from the Principal or at:

<https://www.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/b.017-parent-guardian-concern.pdf> if you are not satisfied with the Principal's response, (4) mail this form to the Unit 4 School Administration Supervisor of the REC if you feel the concern continues to be unresolved by the Principal to your satisfaction; (5) the Unit 4 School Administration Supervisor will explore the concern and respond in writing to the parent.

POWERSCHOOL PARENT PORTAL

The Student-Parent Portal website is a way for parents to access their child's grades, attendance, teacher's comments, school bulletins. Access ID and passwords are provided for all primary students to use throughout their educational years. The website for the portal is: <https://sishrsb.ednet.ns.ca/public/home.html> and is also linked to our schools' webpage.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS AT SCHOOL

Students are encouraged to keep treasured personal items at home, such as electronics, jewellery, money or toys. Parents and students are reminded that the school carries no insurance to cover loss of, or damage to, personal belongings. **The school and the staff accept no responsibility for the safety or the recovery of lost or stolen items.**

Further to this, please be advised students are discouraged from bringing personal footballs, basketballs, baseballs, etc., with them to and from school. The school provides students with the equipment needed to play the games/sports we allow at school, as some of the aforementioned activities are not encouraged at school. Also, as we hope you appreciate and understand, where someone 'owns' these items, they are not neutral and sharing can become a challenge more easily avoided if personal sporting equipment remains at home. Thank you for your support and understanding.

PUPIL SUPERVISION

Outside of the classroom, students are supervised by school staff from bus arrival time in the morning (7:45 a.m.) to recess, and again during mid-morning and afternoon instruction. Hired lunch monitors monitor the students during the lunch hour. If interested in becoming a lunch monitor, please contact us. Students are expected to remain on the school grounds throughout the entire day, including the lunch period. The school has a legal obligation to supervise the safety and well-being of students who stay at school, and is only possible if students remain on the school grounds.

REGISTRATION: NEW STUDENTS

FEBRUARY IS REGISTRATION MONTH! It is STRONGLY encouraged students be registered for the coming school year by 1st of March; this includes all new pre- and primary students. Unless families tell the school to the contrary, all students already registered within the school will be automatically placed in a class in the school for the next school year.

SCENT-AWARE ENVIRONMENT

Perfumes cause some children and staff extreme discomfort and illness, so please be aware of our aim to reduce the use of scented products.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC)

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is an elected group who welcomes parental involvement when there are vacancies (to be determined). The SAC meets six times/year, with the meeting dates communicated via email to those who are members. Provincial legislation requires all schools to establish a formally elected body of parent,

community and staff representatives to advise the REC/EECD regarding regional policies and services, to provide support to the school administrators, staff and community, and to learn about our school's improvement efforts.

SCHOOL CLOTHING

While schools are discouraged from creating dress codes, we acknowledge that how we dress affects our attitude and behaviour, as well as our ability to participate in activities to the best of our ability. At OPA, we encourage good taste and personal pride in clothing; we appeal to everyone to be reasonable and respectful of others. Students wearing clothing or hats that promote the use of drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), sex, weapons or violence, or that are vulgar, suggestive or offensive will be asked to change or cover up. We believe that students can resolve this problem if it should arise. Students should also dress appropriately for the weather, out-of-school excursions, and physical education classes. Periodically, the school offers a school clothing sale, and you are encouraged to participate and join us in boosting school spirit!

SCHOOL INSURANCE PROGRAM (SIP)

Information regarding the School Insurance Program is available at www.sip.ca.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Based on previous experience, the required supplies should last the full school year, however, should students need extra supplies (for example, pencils), you will be contacted for support. Supply lists are posted on our website.

SCHOOL TRIPS

Students must have **written permission** to participate in school trips. As verbal permission is not legally-binding, each student requires written consent before they may leave the property. Community members are required to complete a 'J Form' in the office in order to transport students (other than their own) to extra-curricular events in personal vehicles. Any adult who chaperones must first have a completed, current criminal records/vulnerable sector check and child abuse register on file in the office.

SCHOOL VISITS

You are always welcome at the school to volunteer (provided you have the appropriate checks) and for matters that relate to your child. All visitors must check in at the office to receive a visitor badge. If you wish to meet with a teacher or other staff member, **please call to arrange an appointment**. As we try to eliminate disruptions during the day, we request you do not go to the classrooms when classes are in session. We will gladly collect your child from class if you need them to leave early. There are always special times each school year when you are especially encouraged to come to the school, such as Curriculum Night, conferences and concerts; these dates will be shared via email and through teacher's communiques. where applicable.

SCHOOL WEBSITE

The purpose of the website is to promote closer home and school communication, as well as provide a vehicle for students and staff to learn more about computer technology, school improvement and the elementary school program. The address is as follows: <https://opa.hrce.ca/>. Please do not hesitate to provide feedback should you wish to see specific information included on our site.

STUDENTS ILL AT SCHOOL

When a child becomes ill, the family will be contacted to take your child home or to an alternate caregiver. **It is imperative that contact information (emergency phone numbers) be up-to-date**. Should your child be ill before coming to school, either the night before or in the morning, please be encouraged to keep the child home. Students who are in school will be expected to take part in all aspects of the school program. Children will not be permitted to remain in the school during recess or lunch breaks unless there has been contact made with the school as to the reason and duration.

STUDENT PICTURES

Each year, the school offers, as a service to families, the opportunity to have their child's picture taken through a contracted school picture program. Though you are under no obligation to purchase, all students are required to

participate so we have an individual photo for our database.

Please note a 'student images' consent form (as part of your child's demographic information) must be signed for all other photos/videos while at school.

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS

Student Progress Reports are sent home three times during the year: December, April and June. These detailed reports reflect the progress a student is making in learning. Family/ teacher interviews are scheduled online at: **parentinterviews.com/opa** to discuss student progress. All families are encouraged to seek a conference time with the teacher at any time of the school year as needed.

STUDENT SERVICES

Students may receive additional, remedial or enrichment support through our classroom, resource teacher and other staff for certain subject areas and/or for organizational and study skills. Referrals for resource support generally come from the classroom teacher, or a parent in consultation with the teacher, resource teacher and an administrator. Scheduling is dependent on demand for support as well as classroom timetabling. If you would benefit from additional information about resource support, please contact us. Our school also has access to specialized support from a speech/language pathologist, an educational psychologist, and a school counselor and more. Referrals for Student Services support are made through the classroom teacher, the resource teachers, and/or the administrator. Please reach out to your child's teacher if additional services are of interest to you.

TECHNOLOGY

All students explore technology as an aspect of learning and, as such, all classes have access to Chromebooks, iPads, etc. that are networked to a high-speed Internet and/or wireless. Students are only permitted to use the internet in the presence of an adult. Electronic devices are not to be used for personal purposes during the school day, and **must remain in your child's backpack and/or locker unless otherwise directed by an adult. The school does not assume any responsibility for lost or stolen items if students choose to bring them to school.** Please refer to HRCE's Digital Citizenship Policy as needed.

TELEPHONE CALLS

The most appropriate time to call teachers is prior to the start of the school day or after dismissal. In other cases, the message may be left for the teacher who will return the telephone call when they are able. Families wishing to contact a teacher are requested to do so via email or phone call; all addresses are available at our website. **Note: By contract, teachers may have up to two business days to respond. Students are discouraged from calling home directly using personal phones, but rather to seek the support of school staff to do so. Thank you in advance for your support with this expectation.**

Telephones are in each classroom, and in the office, and are available for student use **with adult permission** in the morning, during recess and again at lunch. The phones are not to be used to make after school plans or for discussions that can wait for later at home. **We request families call/text the school, rather than their child; your child will return your call at the next break or when it is least disruptive.**

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are always needed and appreciated at the school. If you have a few hours a month or even one day a week, please contact us with your name/contact information. The guidelines for use of volunteers in the school are based on the HRCE policy. Volunteers must hold all matters connected with their volunteer school experience **in confidence**. When a parent is volunteering in the school, it is not an appropriate time to discuss your child's progress with the teacher. Volunteers must have a Criminal Records Check and Child Abuse Registry Check completed within 3 months of starting to volunteer; these checks will be kept on file for 3 years.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The staff and students actively support the three R's- reduce, reuse, and recycle. Each student plays an important role in managing our school recycling. Please try to use reusable plastic containers for lunches and drinks.



Oyster Pond Academy Caring School Community Initiative & Code of Conduct

OUR CARING SCHOOL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The Caring School Community (CSC) program is a nationally recognized, research-based program for grades K–8 that builds classroom and schoolwide community while developing students' social and emotional (SEL) skills and competencies. CSC strengthens students' connectedness to school—an important element for increasing academic motivation and achievement and for reducing violence and delinquency. Daily class meetings, regular cross-age buddies opportunities, homeside activities, and school-wide community-building events help students develop respect for each other and take ownership for their learning and behavior.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Our students behave admirably most of the time. However, because they are human, they will make mistakes, just as they do in reading and math. At OPA, when a mistake is made, we lend support to 'fix it', an attempt to fix the relationship that has been damaged because of unkind words or actions. If students are ready to 'fix' the problem, we help them to do so through reflection, conflict resolution strategies and collaborative, cooperative problem-solving. If they are not willing to fix the problem, we rely on the use of logical consequences. The school employs progressive discipline, which means applying appropriate consequences and increasing them judiciously when necessary. All these practices are in support of making our classrooms and our school safe, productive and welcoming.

EXPECTATIONS

One support to our CSC program includes common expectations, and responses to misconduct, class to class, teacher to teacher. To this end, please see below the ways in which we expect each other to behave, and the ways staff will lend their support when minor misconduct occurs.

Our Expectations:

- Practice first time listening to adults and to each other
- Make good choices and always try your best
- Use appropriate language and volume for learning environment
- Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself at all times
- Use personal device, only when directed by an adult

CONSEQUENCES

Inappropriate behaviour generally falls into one of two categories: minor indiscretions or major infractions. *Minor Indiscretions* typically include such things as: playground disagreements, failure to remove wet/muddy footwear, or loitering in the hallways. *Major Infractions* may include: violence, defiance or non-compliance with staff requests, bullying, theft, abusive language, or repeated minor indiscretions.

Mistakes are treated as such with the consequence often consisting of a re-teaching of the expectation and its rationale, a teaching of values and virtues, and a promise to comply. Repeated mistakes indicate there is a problem that must be resolved. Frequently this involves an administrator being called in to meet with the student and the staff member to help determine the cause of the recurring behaviour and devise a plan of action. Parents are informed at this level and may also be involved. In the case of major infractions, parents are informed and involved in the initial stages as well.

Consequences are intended to be developmental and logical rather than punitive. As much as possible, we endeavour to make a connection between the inappropriate behaviour and its consequence. Apologizing, repairing or replacing damaged property, and making a promise for the future are all parts of the

restorative process that results from unacceptable behaviour. Restorative practices not only provides reparation to those who have been hurt or wronged, but it also helps restore the wrong-doer's self-esteem. Accepting responsibility for actions and deeds and making amends, are behaviours that renew a child's sense of self-control and self-worth, and lead to better future choices. Failure either to adopt appropriate behaviours, or to follow through on an action plan, may result in more serious consequences such as further loss of privileges, restricted involvement in extracurricular activities or out-of-school excursions, formal contracts and suspensions (in and out of school).

Our Consequences:

- Receive a time-away in the chill zone within the classroom for 5 minutes. If three time-aways are given, the teacher will also call home
- If a 5-minute time-away is refused, the time-away is done in the office. When the student returns to class, he/she will discuss their choice with the teacher
- If the student serves 2 time-aways in the office, this will result in an 'Alternate Learning Environment' (in a location chosen by the adults) for 30-minutes and a phone call made by the teacher to home
- If after 'Alternative Learning Environment' is provided a student continues to experience difficulty, they will be sent to the office for either an in-school suspension for the remainder of the day, to be picked up if very dysregulated and in need to family support, or, if exceedingly disrupting and/or uncooperative, an out-of-school suspension.

***These steps may vary for students benefiting from individualized behavioural supports.**

PROVINCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

There will be instances when the Provincial Code of Conduct applies, such as for physical violence, with consequences beyond time-aways and calls home. Please see the full Provincial Code of Conduct at this link: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/provincialschoolcodeofconduct.pdf>