
Watkins Elementary School Family Handbook 2026-2027



Capitol Hill Cluster School
Where Every Child Achieves

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Who We Are

Mission and Vision

The Peabody and Watkins community holds a common belief in ALL students. As an inclusive school, we will strive to develop open-minded learners who persevere and demonstrate social-emotional and academic abilities. Our students will be prepared to compete globally and be successful in college, career and life.

At Watkins, our mission is to inspire and empower students to achieve their full potential through a nurturing and innovative educational environment. We strive to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and a lifelong passion for learning while fostering integrity, respect, and responsibility within our diverse community. By embracing collaboration and embracing cultural diversity, we aim to prepare our students to become compassionate global citizens who contribute positively to society.

This vision of Watkins Elementary School is to embrace diversity as a cornerstone of education while fostering unity among students from diverse backgrounds and preparing them to thrive in an interconnected world.

School Leaders' Message

Dear Families,

As the Watkins Leadership Team, it is our pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all families. We are thrilled to have you as part of our school community and look forward to working together to support the success of each and every student.

At Watkins, we believe in the power of a strong partnership between home and school. Your involvement and engagement are vital to creating a positive and enriching educational experience for your child. We encourage you to stay connected with us throughout the year by participating in school events, joining our caregiver organizations, and maintaining open lines of communication with our staff.

Our school culture is built on the principles of Panther PRIDE – perseverance, respect, integrity, and dedication to excellence. We are dedicated to fostering a supportive and welcoming environment where every student feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential. We celebrate diversity and strive to create a community where everyone belongs and can contribute to our shared success.

Our dedicated team of educators is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and academically challenging environment where every student can thrive. We strive to foster a love of learning, build strong character, and develop the skills necessary for lifelong success.

This handbook is designed to provide you with important information about our school's policies,

procedures, and programs. Please take the time to review it carefully and keep it handy for future reference. Should you have any questions or need further assistance, do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to support you and your child in any way we can.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. Together, let's make this school year a memorable and successful one!

Go Panthers!

MScott Berkowitz, Principal

Ebon McPherson, Assistant Principal

Tanisha Montgomery, Director of Strategy and Logistics

Dr. Khristina Pullings, Manager of Specialized Instruction

James Taylor, Restorative Justice Coordinator

Who To Contact

To ensure that your inquiries and concerns are addressed by the appropriate person, this graphic can help:



WATKINS ELEMENTARY *Who should I contact?*



STUDENT LEARNING AND CLASS SUPPORT

Questions or concerns about student learning, student SEL, bullying allegations, class communication, and class visits.

First Contact: Teacher | Next Step: Assistant Principal McPherson
ebon.mcpherson@k12.dc.gov



STUDENT SUPPORT

Questions regarding mental health and 504 plans.

First Contact: Carletta Hurt
School Counselor
carletta.hurt@k12.dc.gov
Next Step: Principal Berkowitz

Questions regarding special education services.

First Contact: Case Manager
Next Step: Dr. Pullings
khristina.pullings@k12.dc.gov



MAIN OFFICE

Questions about attendance, enrollment and other paperwork

First Contact: Ms. Roy
shelia.roy@k12.dc.gov
Next Step: Ms. Montgomery
tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov

Questions about Kids Ride Free cards and general office inquiries

First Contact: Ms. Carraway
terrie.carraway@k12.dc.gov
Next Step: Ms. Montgomery
tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov



SAFETY & OTHER SENSITIVE TOPICS

Questions or concerns regarding safety in and around school grounds and other sensitive topics.

First Contact: Ms. Montgomery | Next Step: Principal Berkowitz
tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov mscott.berkowitz@k12.dc.gov



SCHOOL FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

Facility concerns, technology, ASL or other interpretation services, field trips, medication, volunteer clearance, and school event requests.

First Contact: Ms. Montgomery | Next Step: Principal Berkowitz
tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov mscott.berkowitz@k12.dc.gov



BEFORE & AFTERCARE

The Future Stars
<https://www.thefuturestars.net/watkins>
Site Leader Email:
watkins@thefuturestars.net



ATHLETICS

Sports, coaches, and tryouts, usually 4th & 5th grade only.

Athletic Director:
Ms. Montgomery

Title I Information

Title I is the largest source of federal funding for education. Schools receive Title I funds as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Title I funds are used solely to help ensure that children, regardless of family income, can acquire an equitable and quality education that will allow students to become academically proficient.

Watkins is a Title I school for school year 26-27. A DCPS school is eligible to become a Title I schoolwide program if the poverty rate of the school is 35% or more. Watkins uses Title I funding for additional academic and SEL support for students.

More information: <https://dcps.dc.gov/TitleI>

General Operations

School Hours of Operation

School Hours: Monday - Friday: 8:45am - 3:15pm

Student arrival is between 8:20am and 8:40am. This gives students time to eat breakfast, get settled and greet their teachers. Hot breakfast ends at 8:40am. A cold breakfast will be served to late arriving students.

Main Office Hours

Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 8:15am - 4pm

Arrival Procedures

Arrival takes place at the main entrance on 12th and D St SE.

- **Before care:** Begins at 7am and ends at 8:20am.
- Students may enter the building at 8:20am through the main entrance and proceed to the multipurpose room to line up with their classroom and await teacher pick-up.
 - For students in our CES class: caregivers should walk students to welcome desk where they will be greeted by a CES teacher and escorted to the classroom.
- **Breakfast:** Is free for all students and is served from 8:20am- 8:40am. Students who wish to eat breakfast will do so upon entering the cafeteria. When they finish breakfast, they will join their classroom peers in the designated spot in the cafeteria. Students arriving late will also

be offered a grab and go breakfast to eat in their classroom.

- All teachers will report to the multipurpose room to greet their students by 8:40am.
- **Tardy students:** After 8:45am students are considered late.

Dismissal Procedures

- Dismissal is from 3:15pm-3:30pm. Students picked up after 3:30pm are considered a late pick-up. Starting at 3:15pm, all classes are escorted by their teacher to their designated dismissal location. Teachers will solicit your child's dismissal procedure via electronic form before the first day of school. **Walkers:** Will be escorted to the multipurpose room door and may self-dismiss from the door, with caregiver permission.
- **Caregiver Pick Ups:** Students being picked up by their caregiver will be escorted to the field for a teacher-caregiver handoff. *Caregivers must notify teachers that they have retrieved their child.*
 - **Important: all drivers must go westbound on E St SE to maintain a safe pick up and the flow of traffic.**
 - **Drivers: please park on 13th St, D St, or E St to lessen the traffic on E St SE.**
 - In the case of inclement weather, students will be held in the multipurpose room. Caregivers must meet a staff member at the door, and we will call for your child to be dismissed.
 - For students in the CES class, caregivers should report to the welcome desk where students will be escorted to the meet the caregiver.
- **Bus Riders:** Bus riders are escorted to the lobby and supervised by staff while waiting for their transportation.
- **Students attending Aftercare:** Aftercare students will remain on their grade-level hallway with Watkins and aftercare staff.
 - Early pick-ups from aftercare must:
 - communicate with the school for an on-time dismissal or;
 - wait in the main office for pick-up after 3:45pm.
- *There will be no aftercare pick up before 3:45pm.*

LATE PICK-UP

- **Pickup Time:** All students must be picked before 3:30pm.
- **Prohibited Late Pickup:** Any pickup occurring after 3:30pm is strictly prohibited. Caregivers who repeatedly pick up their children after 3:30pm will receive a formal notification letter. Continuous non-compliance may lead to further actions as deemed necessary by the school administration.
- ***NEW*** Students not picked up by 3:30 will wait for their caregivers in the multipurpose room. Caregivers should report to the multipurpose room exterior door to collect their child.

Required Paperwork – Elementary Student Dismissal Authorization Form

Beginning in School Year (SY) 2026-2027, all elementary-aged students must have an Elementary Student Dismissal Authorization form on file by the first day of school. Fillable forms are available

below and can be submitted to your student's school electronically, or you can pick up a paper copy of the form in the school's main office. Parents must submit a separate dismissal form for each student.

Read more on the DCPS website: <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/elementary-student-dismissal>

The Elementary Student Dismissal Authorization Form will be mailed home in the summer mailer. Caregivers may also print, complete and return their own forms using the link above. Forms can be returned to the main office or to your child's teacher.

Student Attendance: Tardy Policy, Documenting Student Absence and Early Dismissal

Regular school attendance is essential for academic success. Our goal is to ensure that all students attend school on a regular and timely basis. A child who is not in their classroom at 8:45 a.m. is recorded as TARDY. Caregivers must come into the building to sign their child into the "Tardy Book" before they can proceed to class. After being signed in, tardy students will proceed to class on their own.

Excused absences and tardies:

For your child's absence to be excused, caregivers are required to provide an excuse note to the main office within five (5) days of their child's return to school. While we welcome you communicating your child's absence to their teacher, this communication will not ensure that their absence is excused or documented accurately. For accurate attendance documentation, all excuse notes must be turned into the main office, or emailed to: watkinsesenroll@k12.dc.gov

Notes must:

- Include the date
- Include the reason for the absence; and include the specific dates the student was or will be out of school.

Below is the list of allowable excused absence reasons according to the DCPS attendance policy:

- Student illness (a doctor's note is required for a student absent 5 or more consecutive days);
- Medical or dental appointments for the student.
- Observance of a religious holiday.
- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.
- Death in the student's immediate family.
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding as a plaintiff, defendant, witness or juror.
- An emergency or other circumstance approved by DCPS.

- Absences to allow students to visit their parent or guardian, who is in the military immediately before, or immediately after deployment.

In addition to the reasons required by regulation, DCPS has classified the following additional circumstances as excused absences:

- School visits for students in K through 8th grades (e.g., a 5th grader visiting a middle school before enrolling) (up to one day);
- Take Our Children to Work Day; and
- Religious events or celebrations outside of a religious holiday (up to five cumulative days in a school year).

For questions regarding student attendance policies, please contact our Attendance Counselor, Ms. Roy at shelia.roy@k12.dc.gov.

Early Dismissal & Approved Pick-Up Contacts

Early dismissal ends daily at 2:45pm. Only approved contacts, as noted in our school database, will be allowed to retrieve students for early dismissal. To add individuals to your child's approved contact list, email shelia.roy@k12.dc.gov or tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov or call the main office at 202-698-3355.

Steps to retrieve your child early from school:

1. Come into the building and check in with security—you will need to show your government issued ID.
2. Once signed in, you will provide the main office with your child's name and their teacher's name.
3. You can also call 5-10 minutes ahead of arrival to ask for your child to come down.
 - **To minimize the amount of time your child is out of class, we ask that you do not call more than 10 minutes ahead of pick-up time.**

DCPS Attendance and Truancy Policy

The following school-based attendance interventions will take place as students accumulate unexcused absences:

- 3 unexcused absences: letter will be sent home or emailed to family
- 5 unexcused absences: a member from the attendance team will meet with the family and support the individual student by developing an attendance action plan and intervention strategies that are school- or community-based and are designed to enhance the student's success. Meetings can be held in-person, over the telephone, or on a video teleconference.
- 7 unexcused absences: MPD warning letter will be sent.
- 10 unexcused absences: Child and Family Services Agency referral will be made.
- 20 consecutive full day unexcused absences: student is at risk of being withdrawn from school.

The full DCPS *Attendance and Truancy Policy* can be found here:
<https://attendance.dc.gov/page/attendance-policies>

DCPS Calendar

The final calendar for the 2026-2027 School Year can be found here:
<https://dcps.dc.gov/page/sy-26-29-calendars>

Daily Schedule for Students

7:00am – 8:20am – Before care

8:20am – 8:40am – Student Arrival

8:45am – 9:10am – Homeroom morning meeting

9:10am – 3:15pm – Instruction, Recess, and Lunch

- Students will attend inner core classes (specials) for 45 minutes each day. Special classes are library, music, art, science, and Health and PE.
- Students attend a 30-minute recess daily and a 30-minute lunch period.

3:15pm – 3:30pm is the dismissal window. Caregivers should collect their child by 3:30pm at the latest.

3:30pm – 6pm – After care (programming at cost)

A more detailed daily schedule will be provided to caregivers from their child's teacher.

Inclement Weather and School Closing Communication

In the event of inclement weather such as snow, ice, or extreme heat or cold, or other emergencies, Peabody and Watkins will follow all [DC Public Schools procedures and policies](#). DC Public School may

- Close schools for the day
- Open schools two hours late
- Close schools two hours early.

Should snow or severe weather be expected, families will be notified via email and text message if schools may open late, dismiss early, or be closed. DCPS' operating status will also be posted online at dcps.dc.gov, on @dcpublicschools social media accounts, and with local news outlets.

DC Public Schools, *not Peabody or Watkins leadership*, make decisions on operating status and takes the lead on communicating to the public. Families should attend to the outlets above (not emails from the principal or our own social media) to obtain the most current and accurate information.

All-Day Closing

- All schools shall be closed for the day.

- Extracurricular activities, interscholastic contests, team practices, field trips, adult- and community education classes, and recreation programs in schools and on school grounds are canceled.
- All offices are open unless the closing of offices is specified.

Two-Hour Delayed Opening Schedule

- There is no before care.
- Students shall report two hours later than their regularly scheduled time. Field trips will be postponed or canceled.

All offices are open at the regular time unless the closing of offices is specified. In such situations, Watkins Front Office should open at 10:00 a.m. but please call (202-698-3355) before you visit on a delayed-opening day to make sure someone will be in the office when you arrive.

Early-closing decisions

- DCPS opens with the intent of remaining open for the full school day. Early dismissals are used only in extreme situations. The decision to cancel any afterschool program or athletic event will come from the Chancellor. In such cases, DCPS will inform schools and families that afterschool programming is cancelled. If we need to close early, students will still be served lunch before dismissal.

Family Engagement: School-Home Partnerships

Family engagement is critical to students' academic success and well-being. Our vision for effective family engagement is:

Caregivers will feel empowered to partner with school staff to support the academic success and overall wellness of their children.

Communication - What Caregivers Can Expect

Regular family-teacher communication is a meaningful step to long-term family engagement, and this is what you can expect from our staff.

Who to contact? Use [these links on our website](#) to find the right person for your question. Requests to principal Berkowitz will be forwarded to the staff indicated on the "Who Should I Contact" document.

Please note that all staff are expected to return emails, phone calls, and other messages within two business days. Please note that teachers may have days off that are not necessarily holidays.

From School Leaders

- Weekly Principal Communication via email “Principal’s Message.” Principal Berkowitz sends a weekly message to caregivers on Fridays that includes some celebrations, important dates and events, action steps for caregivers and other school-wide business. Any class- or teacher-level communication will come from students’ teachers.
- Reminder Texts and Emails. We use a system called Blackboard to schedule emails and texts for reminders about events. For example, families may get a day-of email to remind them of Picture Day.
- Not receiving blackboard messages? Contact the principal.

From Teachers and Staff

- A Weekly Newsletter from the teacher will answer the following common questions:
 - A look ahead – what are we learning next?
 - A look back – what did we learn?
 - Spotlight on a recent Assessment, Task or Assignment
 - Important dates
- Class Dojo
 - Class Dojo is a communication app connects teachers and caregivers to share photos, videos, and messages through the school day. They may use ClassDojo to work together as a team, share in the classroom experience, and bring big ideas to life in their classrooms and homes. It is also be used as a behavior management program based on points, and students earn positive points.
 - Families can join the Watkins Class Dojo community here:
<https://www.classdojo.com/ul/p/addKid?target=school&schoolID=5407bee9fdb7fde401e0bf53>
- **Take Home Folders – Take Home Tuesday**

All important classroom and school information will be sent home in paper via the Take Home Folder, on Tuesdays. Caregivers may find the following examples of paper communications in their child’s folder:

- Graded/score work and ungraded work
- Reading log (Watkins only)
- iReady usage logs for Math and ELA
- Flyers for school-wide or other special events – as appropriate,
- Individualized communications to families – as needed. For example, newsletters for caregivers not responsive to email or Class Dojo.

Beginning of year information:

- Student ID and QR Code
- Clever Access

Visitor Policy: In-Person Meetings and Classroom Visits

At Watkins, we encourage staff and families to meet in person to support the growth of our students. **Class visits and in-person meetings are welcome so long as they are scheduled.** All visitors must make an appointment to meet at school *at least 24 hours* in advance of the meeting. There are exceptions to this policy in the case of extreme and immediate needs.

Visitors will not be allowed to “pop up” into classrooms without teachers’ prior consent and may not have immediate access to any school staff (including school leaders, teachers, culture cultivators, social workers, etc.) at any time. Visitors without an appointment will only be permitted entry with the approval of the school administration.

Upon entering the school building, all visitors must first stop at the security desk, and are required to show their government-issued ID. Following security check-in, visitors will be directed to the main office. Visitors will either be escorted by a staff member or student to their intended destination in the building. This includes Food Prints volunteering, birthday celebrations, and meetings with staff. For school-wide or grade-level celebrations (cultural celebrations, grade-level events, etc.) visitors do not need to be escorted.

Caregiver Teacher Conferences

Watkins will host family conferences. After each of the first 2 terms, teachers will host family conferences in their classrooms for caregivers to discuss what students are learning, how they can further their learning at home, and to get to know each other. Conferences are scheduled to be 10-15 minutes long.

Aspen Parent Portal

The Parent Portal allows families to view their child’s report cards as soon as they are published. DCPS will email caregivers about two weeks after the end of the term.

Your initial log-in information for the Parent Portal will come via email. If you haven’t received your username and password, please reach out to your school’s registrar to make sure they have your correct email address and have granted you Parent Portal access in the system. You can access the [DCPS Parent Portal Access Guide](#) for further help.

PTA Involvement

Our Parent-Teacher Association is committed to enriching the school experience for students by supporting our teachers and school. The PTA offers many opportunities for caregivers to engage in community events, support with fund raising, and in general, connect with other families. All caregivers are welcome! Please visit our website for more information: <https://www.capitolhillclusterschool.org/join-pta>

Student Culture Policies and Procedures

Panther PRIDE

Panther Pride is Watkins' cultural foundation that aims to support students, staff, and schools in creating a schoolwide framework of clear behavioral expectations and programming that supports the recognition of positive behaviors. The tenets of Panther Pride, combined with explicit instruction on the expectations matrix, the collection of behavioral data for analysis, and the intentional use of our Panther Pride mantra, help create and build a positive school culture and atmosphere.

The four tenets of Panther Pride are:

Perseverance • Respect • Integrity • Dedication to Excellence

Restorative Practices

At Watkins Elementary School, restorative practices are used proactively to build strong relationships, foster a sense of belonging, and create a positive school community. Through strong-starts, social-emotional learning, and opportunities for students to share their voices, we help students develop empathy, communication skills, and accountability. When conflicts occur, we use restorative conversations and problem-solving processes to help students understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, rebuild relationships, and learn from mistakes. Our goal is to support every child in growing up as a respectful, responsible, and caring member of the Watkins community.

Bullying Prevention and Response

Definition of Bullying: Policies define what constitutes bullying, distinguishing it from conflicts or behaviors. Bullying typically involves repetitive, intentional aggression, imbalance of power, and potential harm to the victim.

Our bullying point of contact is Mr. James Taylor, James.Taylor4@k12.dc.gov

Bullying prevention in schools are critical to creating safe and supportive learning environments. Here at Watkins, we have zero tolerance for bullying. These policies outline procedures for preventing, identifying, and addressing bullying incidents.

1. **Proactive Measures:** We offer education programs that promote kindness, empathy, and respectful behavior. These programs may be integrated into the curriculum and reinforced through school-wide initiatives.
2. **Reporting Procedures:** Any student can make a report to any staff member at any time. Similarly, caregivers can report instances of alleged bullying to any staff member in email, phone, or in person. All reports will be heard promptly and confidentially.
3. **Investigation and Response:** Once a bullying incident is reported, we investigate the complaint thoroughly and impartially. This may involve interviewing witnesses, gathering evidence, and assessing the impact on the victim.
4. **Consequences and Interventions:** The outcome of any bullying investigation will be either conflict or bullying. Consequences for individuals engaged in either conflict or bullying

behavior, which may include disciplinary actions or educational interventions. We strongly emphasize the importance of restorative practices to repair harm and promote understanding however, if warranted, a period out of school by way of suspension will be administered if necessary. Incidents of confirmed bullying will also result in a safety plan.

5. **Support for Victims:** Policies address the support and protection of victims of bullying, ensuring they receive appropriate counseling, emotional support, and accommodations to feel safe and secure at school.
6. **Caregiver Involvement:** Schools encourage caregiver involvement in bullying prevention efforts, including educating caregivers about signs of bullying, encouraging open communication, and partnering with families to reinforce positive behavior at home and school. Please monitor your student's cellular devices, social media etc.
7. **Training for Staff and Students:** We provide ongoing training for school staff to recognize, prevent, and respond effectively to bullying. Students also receive education on recognizing and reporting bullying behavior, fostering a culture of empathy and respect.
8. **Review and Evaluation:** We regularly review and evaluate our bullying prevention policies and practices to assess effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure compliance with legal requirements.

By implementing comprehensive bullying prevention policies, we here at Watkins ES are committed to creating safe, inclusive environments where all students can learn and thrive without fear of harassment or intimidation. These policies play a crucial role in fostering positive school climates and promoting the well-being of students and staff alike.

Student Cell Phone and Personal Device Policy

Cell phones are not allowed to be used by students in any DCPS school. The DCPS policy can be found on the DCPS website, <https://dcps.dc.gov/cellphones>. Caregivers should not expect students to access their cell phones during the instructional day. In an event of an emergency, caregivers should contact the school office immediately and not call the student's cellular device.

At Watkins, we will collect student cell phone when students enter the building in the morning. Phones will be returned to students at the end of the day. Students attending aftercare receive their phones when they leave Watkins for the day.

Birthdays and Classroom Celebrations

Classroom celebrations are encouraged and welcomed; however, the following guidelines must be met when it comes to classroom celebrations.

1. **Food and Treats:** All treats must be store-bought and pre-packaged to ensure safety. Remember to confirm your child's allergy specifics with your child's teacher in collaboration with the school nurse.
2. **Inclusivity:** Ensure that celebrations do not exclude students based on dietary restrictions, cultural beliefs, or financial reasons.
3. **Timing and Frequency:** The agreed upon date and time must not interfere with the

classroom learning agenda nor the school agenda for that specific day. All celebrations must take place in the afternoon starting at 2:30 *in the classroom*.

4. **Permission and Coordination:** Teachers and caregivers will need to coordinate celebrations in advance (at least a week) and communicate with the front office staff to make them aware; especially if they involve decorations, special activities, or guest speakers.
5. **Number of people allowed to join:** While we want to celebrate with our students, only a maximum of two people will be allowed to join classroom celebrations.

Dress code

At Watkins, we aim to maintain a productive learning environment while promoting safety, respect, and inclusivity among students and staff. Here are some guidelines for appropriate dress in the building:

Modesty: Clothing should cover the torso, midriff, and underwear adequately. Avoid excessively revealing or provocative attire, such as crop tops, low-cut tops, short shorts, and miniskirts. Bottoms should reach their students' fingertips. Tops should be as wide as three fingers around the shoulder.

Neatness and Cleanliness: Clothes should be clean and in good condition, free from offensive language, symbols, or images that promote drugs, alcohol, violence, or hate speech.

Comfort and Safety: Attire should allow students to participate comfortably in all school activities, including physical education and sports. Shoes should be safe and appropriate for the school environment. No open-toed shoes or sandals.

Respect for Others: Clothing and accessories should not disrupt the learning environment or create distractions. Avoid items that could be considered disrespectful or offensive to others based on cultural, religious, or personal beliefs.

Individual Expression: We at Watkins recognize the importance of allowing students to express their individuality within reasonable limits. Therefore, all dress must be respectful and non-offensive.

Note: Caregivers will be notified and asked to supply appropriate attire if needed.

Lost and Found

Watkins staff and students will maintain a Lost and Found area in the vestibule near the multipurpose room. Caregivers should check the lost and found periodically. Staff will arrange for items to be donated on a quarterly basis.

Classroom Assignments

Classroom assignments are made in a collaborative way between a student's current teachers, the

school's culture team, social workers and administration. We strive to create classes balanced by race, gender, learning style, academic strengths, and personality. Families are notified of classroom assignments the week before students return.

Annual Events

Martin Luther King Jr. Recitations- Each year the Watkins community gathers at the Lincoln Memorial to witness and commemorate Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech recited by our fifth-grade class. This event occurs on or close to the actual MLK Jr holiday.

Book Character Day- Watkins celebrates literature and encourages reading among students by having students and staff dress up as their favorite characters from their favorite books. This event happens on October 31.

Career Day- Career Day is a Watkins tradition to celebrate and expose students to Black Excellence in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math). Black community members are invited to showcase their profession and/or talent in the STEAM field so that students have first hand exposure to Blacks in STEAM. This event is held in February.

Spirit Weeks- Spirit Week is a fun and spirited event commonly organized by schools to promote school pride, camaraderie among students, and a sense of community. It typically spans a week and involves themed dress-up days, activities, and competitions.

Awards Assemblies - During these assemblies, awards are presented to honor excellence in various areas such as academics, sports, arts, community service, leadership, and more. The atmosphere is one of pride, encouragement, and inspiration as students are acknowledged publicly for their hard work and dedication. These events occur 2-3 weeks after the end of terms 1, 2, and 3.

Student Health and Safety

School Health Personnel

School health personnel (nurses and health technicians) are contracted by DC Health and Children's School Services, School Nurse Program, and are therefore, not Watkins employees. On an annual basis, and periodically throughout the school year, the contracting agencies assess our students' health needs and determines the in-person health coverage our school will receive. In the absence of a nurse or health technician, we have staff trained to administer medication and treat minor injuries. In the event of an emergency, the school health personnel or front office staff will call 911 and contact the student's caregiver.

Our assigned school health personnel can be reached via our main school line at 202-698-3355 or directly at 202-698-3353.

Medications and Treatment at School

If your child has diabetes, asthma, allergies, or other medical conditions, please follow these important steps below so we can make sure that your child's medication and treatment needs are met while at school.

Completing Medication Forms

Whenever possible, administer medications at home. If your child needs **access to medications or medical treatment during school hours**, please complete the following steps:

1. Have your medical provider complete the appropriate forms – [Medication and Treatment Authorization Forms](#), the [Asthma Action Plan](#) and the [Action Plan for Anaphylaxis](#). These forms are available from your school's main office and online: <https://dcps.dc.gov/node/1003562>.
2. **Drop off the medicine and required paperwork to the school nurse.** In the nurse's absence, they can be turned into Ms. Carraway at Watkins and Ms. Shields at Peabody. Medications will not be accepted without the appropriate paperwork.
3. **Communicate** your child's medical needs to their homeroom teacher. Please note that your child will not be able to receive medication during the school day (including on field trips) until steps 1 and 2 have been completed.

If your child needs a dietary accommodation, your provider should also complete the [Dietary Accommodations Form](#).

Reviewing Medication Forms

After your provider completes the appropriate forms, please submit the forms to our assigned school nurse or health technician. Also, bring with you the medication that your child requires, with proper labels from the pharmacy. If your child requires a special treatment, bring in the equipment needed as well. Our assigned school nurse or health technician will review the completed forms and seek your permission to speak with your child's medical provider if clarity is needed.

Making Plans to Provide Medication, Treatment or Accommodations

Once the forms are reviewed, our assigned school nurse or health technician will prepare an Individualized Health Plan, as needed, that details how your child's health condition will be managed at school. Our assigned school nurse or health technician is available to educate other school staff who will need to understand your child's unique medical needs during the school day.

Administering Medication and Providing Treatments

When your child needs to receive medication or treatment, school staff will ensure that your child is released from class to go to the health suite where our assigned school nurse or health technician will administer the medication or treatment. Sometimes our assigned health personnel is not at school due to a normal absence or to cover another school. When this occurs, trained school staff will administer your child's medication. If your child requires a special treatment that the school

nurse is unable to administer, the school nurse's supervisor will assign another nurse to provide the treatment.

Communicable Diseases

A communicable disease is spread from one person to another through direct or indirect contact. This includes:

- Lice
- Strep throat
- Mono
- Hand-foot-mouth disease
- Pink Eye
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- RSV

Reporting Communicable Diseases

All instances of communicable disease must be confirmed by a medical professional and reported immediately to mscott.berkowitz@k12.dc.gov and tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov so that we can enact the appropriate cleaning and reporting procedures, which include:

1. Notifying assigned school nurse or health technician who will follow up with caregiver and student
2. Reporting the incident in our District reporting tool
3. Ensuring proper cleaning in the impacted space(s)
4. Working with our District-level partners to generate communications to be sent to the impacted classroom.

Communicable Disease: Return to School Protocol

Return to school protocol will vary depending on the illness. All communicable illness will either require a doctor's note or proof of treatment, in order your child to return to school. This note must be provided to our assigned nurse or school health technician **and submitted to the main office or emailed to watkinsesenroll@k12.dc.gov.**

Emergency Drills

As mandated by DCPS, monthly we will conduct one fire drill and one alternate drill. These include:

- One Alert Status drill.
- One Earthquake drill; (October of each SY). <https://www.shakeout.org/>
- One 500 feet Evacuation/Relocation.

- Two Lockdown drills.
- One Reverse Evacuation.
- One Shelter-in-Place and
- One Severe Weather Safe Area drill.

All drills will be facilitated and monitored by our School Emergency Response Team (which consists of school leaders, mental health staff, culture cultivators, office support and school security). Caregivers will be notified about drills via the Principal's Newsletter.

Athletics

We believe extracurricular activities along with academics contribute to the development of our students. Students can participate in a variety of sports.

Potential athletes must adhere to all rules and requirements before and while participating in any sport. Failure to do so could result in the denial or removal of a student from the team. Potential athletes will receive a participation packet which must be fully completed by the parent/guardian of the student by the deadline for them to participate. **Each student must also have a current Universal Health Certificate (UHC/Health Form) completed and signed by a licensed physician.**

<https://www.thedciaa.com/participation-forms>

Clubs

Our clubs will be led by staff members which students can join. Some clubs will meet after school. Students may join clubs once the consent of their parents and signed permission slips given by the staff lead are received. Students are encouraged to start their own clubs! Students need an adult sponsor and permission from Principal Berkowitz for the club to begin.

Field Trips

Students and families can expect at least three field trips during the school year. We view our city as part of our classroom and students deserve to have their school experiences enriched by the wealth of resources Washington D.C. has to offer. Students will be offered walking field trips or field trips that require public transportation. Students will have at least one trip that brings them further on a charter bus. Caregivers may have to make a financial contribution to pay for your child's admission or trip transportation. This will be communicated on the permission slip. **We ask that caregivers submit permission slips and money by the indicated deadline to support effective and timely trip implementation.**

Caregiver Chaperone Clearance Process

We encourage all caregivers to engage in all school activities, including field trips. In order to serve as a field trip chaperone, caregivers must first be cleared through the DCPS Clearance process, that includes submitting fingerprints. Complete the following steps:

1. Visit this website for the clearance application: <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/volunteer-our-schools>
2. Complete the online application form in one sitting (*takes about 10-15minutes*). Be prepared with your Social Security Number (if you have one) + at least five (5) years of address history + photo/copy of a government-issued photo identification (e.g. driver's license, passport, military ID) that shows your legal name + date of birth (*you will need to upload this file as a PDF/PNG/JPG or JPEG*).
3. After submitting the form, you'll receive instructions on how to schedule a fingerprint session.
4. Wait for DCPS Clearance to send you an email confirming your clearance. **Forward email to tanisha.montgomery@k12.dc.gov**. If you do not receive an email confirming your clearance w/in 10 days of getting fingerprinted, please email: DCPS.Clearance@k12.dc.gov to request an update.

Before and After School Care

Watkins' aftercare provider is The Future Stars <https://www.capitolhillclusterschool.org/before-after-care>. Care is available for all students, and we are proud to offer a discount for families that qualify for free and reduced meals. See the website above to enroll.

Before care opens at 7am and all students will be offered a free breakfast.

Aftercare begins at the end of the school day and concludes at 6pm. The Future Stars staff and Watkins staff work together to transition students from their school day to aftercare.