

# **Thomas J Dempsey Therapeutic Day School**



2026-2027

## **Parent/Student Handbook**

1261 IL Rte. 38

Nachusa, IL 61057

Phone: (815) 888-0002

Fax: (815) 627-0060

Janine Huffman, Principal

Shanna Withrow, Dean of Students

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## Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an addendum to the Home School's Handbook and a guide to students and parents regarding the rules, policies, and regulations of the Thomas J. Dempsey Therapeutic Day School (herein referred to as TJD School). This handbook is a summary of the school's rules and expectations and is not a comprehensive statement of school procedures. The administration reserves the right to interpret each individual situation in order to provide the safest learning environment possible. If you have any questions regarding any section, do not hesitate to contact the administration for an explanation. The Board's comprehensive policy manual is available for public inspection through the District's website [www.dps170.org](http://www.dps170.org) or at the Board office, located at:  
1335 Franklin Grove Rd. Dixon, IL 61021.

Additional Information is available in Illinois State Board of Education publications, *A Parent's Guide- The Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities* and *Explanation of Procedural Safeguards*. Both are available at the Lee County Special Education Office in Dixon and at TJD School in Nachusa.

## Description

TJD School is a K-12 school that provides therapeutic special education services for children who experience difficulty in their home schools due to severe behavioral and/or emotional challenges. Small class sizes with a low staff to student ratio and a wide range of support services allow students to improve their ability to function within the classroom setting, with the goal of returning to their home schools with both academic and socially appropriate behaviors.

## Mission Statement

The Mission of TJD School:

- Provide and maintain a safe, caring learning environment.
- Modify students' social skills and behavior to a level appropriate for success in returning to their home school environment or successful long-term tenure at our school.
- Help increase students' academic growth.
- Help develop students into contributing citizens of our community through the commitment of our quality staff, in partnership with parents and community agencies, utilizing individualized educational approaches and small student-staff ratios in a nurturing environment of mutual respect and dignity.

## School Wide Expectations

**SAFETY:** Are my actions safe for myself and for others?

**RESPECT:** Do my actions show respect for myself and for others?

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Do my actions meet the expectation of taking care of myself and being a dependable member of the school?

## STAFF DIRECTORY

<u>Mrs. Janine Huffman-Principal</u>	<a href="mailto:jhuffman@dps170.org">jhuffman@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mrs. Shanna Withrow- Teacher/Dean</u>	<a href="mailto:swithrow@dps170.org">swithrow@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mrs. Brandy Farris- Secretary</u>	<a href="mailto:bfarris@dps170.org">bfarris@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mr. Dwight "Pete" Hill- PE Teacher</u>	<a href="mailto:dhill@dps170.org">dhill@dps170.org</a>
<u>Ms. Rhonda Payne - Paraprofessional</u>	<a href="mailto:rpayne@dps170.org">rpayne@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mrs. Debbie Sneek - Paraprofessional</u>	<a href="mailto:dsneek@dps170.org">dsneek@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mrs. Brenda Quaco - Paraprofessional</u>	<a href="mailto:bquaco@dps170.org">bquaco@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mr Paul "Pete" Downs – Custodian</u>	<a href="mailto:pdowns@dps170.org">pdowns@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mr. Adam Gerber – Teacher</u>	<a href="mailto:agerber@dps170.org">agerber@dps170.org</a>
<u>Ms. Caitlin Irvin – School Social Worker</u>	<a href="mailto:cirvin@dps170.org">cirvin@dps170.org</a>
<u>Mrs. Dakota Boelter – Substitute Teacher</u>	<a href="mailto:dboelter@dps170.org">dboelter@dps170.org</a>
<u>Ms. Samantha Logan - Paraprofessional</u>	<a href="mailto:slogan@dps170.org">slogan@dps170.org</a>

## Absences

An absence from school is either excused or unexcused. It is the responsibility of the school, rather than the parent/guardian, to determine if an absence is excused. Excused absences include illness, mental health, court appearance, death in the family, and family emergency. Absences not called in shall be considered unexcused.

Every absence must be reported by the parent/guardian on the day of the absence, preferably by 7:45 a.m. (No student may report absence, unless they are 18 or older).

Parent/guardian should do the following when calling:

1. Identify self
2. State student's name
3. State reason for absence

When it is known in advance that a student will be tardy or absent, the parent/guardian is requested to notify the school prior to this. If a student arrives late with a parent/guardian, the parent must accompany the student to the TJD School office to check the student in.

### **Inclement Weather/School Closings**

Students are to follow the closings/early dismissals of Dixon Public Schools. If Dixon District 170 remains open, but the home school district closes, then the student will follow their home school district and not attend school. This will not count against the attendance as the staff at TJD are aware of the schools they serve closing. Information regarding school closing due to the weather is reported immediately to the radio, newspaper, and TV stations.

### **School Check in Procedure for Visitors**

Visitors should identify themselves and inform office personnel of their reasons for being at school.

Any person wishing to confer with a staff member should contact that staff member to make an appointment. Conferences with teachers are held, to the extent possible, outside school hours or during the teachers' conference/preparation period.

No person on school property or at a school event shall perform any of the following acts:

1. Strike, injure, threaten, harass, or intimidate a staff member, board member, sports official or coach, or any other person.
2. Behave in an unsportsmanlike manner or use vulgar or obscene language.
3. Unless specifically permitted by State law, possess a weapon, any object that can reasonably be considered a weapon or looks like a weapon, or any dangerous device.
4. Damage or threaten to damage another's property.
5. Damage or deface school property.
6. Violate any Illinois law or municipal, local, or county ordinance.
7. Smoke or otherwise use of tobacco products.
8. Distribute, consume, use, possess, or be impaired by or under the influence of an alcoholic beverage, cannabis, other lawful product, or illegal drug.
9. Be present when the person's alcoholic beverage, cannabis, other lawful product, or illegal drug consumption is detectable, regardless of when and/or where the use occurred.
10. Use or possess medical cannabis, unless he or she has complied with Illinois' Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Act and District policies.
11. Impede, delay, disrupt, or otherwise interfere with any school activity or function (including using cellular phones in a disruptive manner).
12. Enter upon any portion of school premises at any time for purposes other than those that are lawful and authorized by the board may enter our Schools.

\*\*\* Please refer to Home School's Handbook for more information.

## **TJD Level System of Rewards**

### **Level 1:**

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Do ALL assigned work
- Meet w/ School Social Worker
- **NO ELOPEMENT, PHYSICAL AGGRESSION, PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS, OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY.**
- Must Earn 80% of points per day for 10 days for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grades and 10 days consecutively for 4<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grades to apply for Level 2

#### **Privileges:**

- Use Dempsey Dollars earned to buy items from Dempsey store
- Can earn free time in the classroom

- Can earn recess during the day

### **Level 2:**

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Maintain Level 1 Responsibilities
- **NO STAFF PLACEMENT OF TIME OUT OR ISOLATED TIME OUT**
- **MUST ATTEND SCHOOL REGULARLY- NO MORE THAN 1 UNEXCUSED ABSENCE PER MONTH**
- Must earn 85% of points per day for 15 consecutive school days for K– 8<sup>th</sup> grades to apply for Level 3

#### **Privileges:**

- Level 1 Privileges
- Listen to approved music during earned free time
- School Jobs
- Booths at breakfast and lunch
- Snacks during a movie/fun activity
- Earn a 5-minute visit with staff of choice on Friday

### **Level 3:**

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Maintain Level 1 & 2 Responsibilities
- **SCHOOL APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS**
- **MUST BE TO SCHOOL BY 8:00a.m. every day**
- Must earn 90% of points per day for 20 consecutive school days for K – 8<sup>th</sup> grades to apply for Level 4

#### **Privileges:**

- Level 2 Privileges
- 1 homework pass per week if meets point criteria for the week
- Board games, card games, or puzzles after lunch on Wed. for ½ hour in Activity room.
- May go on outings
- Classroom helper for other classrooms
- Discount at Dempsey Store- \$5 off purchase of \$10 or more
- Earn lunch time with staff of choice on Friday

#### **Level 4:**

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Maintain Level 1,2, and 3 Responsibilities
- Must earn 95% of points per day for 25 consecutive days for K- 8<sup>th</sup> grades every day

#### **Privileges:**

- Level 3 Privileges
- Discount at Dempsey Store - \$7 off purchase of \$10 or more (not to be combined with the Level 3 discount)
- Monthly food purchases from town at own expense
- ½ hour break after lunch on Wed. and Fri. in the Activity Rm. to play
- Potential to return to Home School with IEP team agreement

### **Mainstreaming**

The goal of our program is to have our students return to their home school. When a student is deemed ready for home school mainstreaming, an IEP meeting will be scheduled to discuss the transition process and include parents / guardians and the home school team.

Students deemed ready are those who demonstrate BOTH academic AND socially appropriate behaviors. The fact that a student has worked him or herself to the highest level of the classroom management program does not necessarily indicate that he/she is socially ready to transition back to their Home School.

### **Student Behavior – Prohibited Student Conduct**

\*\*\*Please refer to Home School's Student Handbook

### **Use of Isolated Time Out and Physical Restraint**

Isolated time out and physical restraint are restrictive interventions which should only be used in an emergency. An emergency is a situation in which immediate, restrictive intervention is necessary to protect students or other individuals or to prevent serious property damage. An isolated time out or physical restraint should only be used to protect students when they are a danger to themselves or to others. These techniques are designed to help out-of-control students regain appropriate control. The use of time out / restraint ends as soon as the student is no longer a danger to self or others. All

school staff that are involved in time out or restraint receive training through Crisis Prevention Institute in crisis de-escalation techniques, physical holds and identifying signs of distress during physical restraint and time out.

Public Act 102-0339 specifies that the use of physical restraint, time out, and isolated time out will be limited to instances in which the student's behavior poses an "imminent danger of serious physical harm". The Illinois State Board of Education mandates that documentation of the use of Time Out, Isolated Time Out and Physical Restraint be completed and submitted to the State Superintendent. Parents must also be notified of the incident and provided with documentation. Attempts are made to notify the parent as soon as possible via phone, email or in person and by providing the documentation no later than 2 school days after the incident.

Documentation at TJD School is completed using state forms, which include a summary of the incident and a written description of any relevant events leading up to the incident, interventions attempted prior to implementation and the time out / physical restraint used. Documentation includes the time of the event, school personnel that were involved, and any possible injuries that may have occurred.

Per an amendment of PA 102-0339 during the 2021-2022 school year, parents have a right to request a meeting with school personnel following the use of restraint or time out. If requested, the meeting must take place within 2 school days following the request. In addition, when a student experiences 3 incidents of restraint or time out on any 3 days within a 30-day period, the student's behavior intervention plan must be reviewed. A meeting will be scheduled, and parents will be invited to review the behaviors, behavior intervention plan, and discuss the needs of student.

## **Transportation**

All students are transported by bus provided by their home district. A student may be driven to or from school by a parent or guardian only.

The bus ride to and from school is an extension of the school day and as such, all expectations for conduct apply. Improper conduct on a bus may result in disciplinary measures, including the suspension of bus riding privileges. For outside tuition students, the home district will be responsible for discipline on their buses.

Students will be dropped off at the specified drop off location that parent / guardian stated on the Bus Transportation form. **Students will not be allowed to be dropped off at an alternate location.**

## **Guidelines for Academics**

### **Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Students enrolled in these classes are expected to complete assigned classroom tasks, be involved in group projects, and complete quizzes/tests if required. Grades are earned not given. Our grade levels are as follows:

**P = Proficiency** - Exceeding IEP goals and / or at grade level academic achievement

**M = Meets Expectations** – Meeting or Mastery of IEP goals

**E = Emerging** – Behavioral and Academic skills are emerging and showing some growth

**NI = Needs Improvement** – Behavioral and Academic skills are not at grade level and showing little to no growth

Late Work Procedures: All work is expected to be turned in on time. Unexcused late work is accepted, with a penalty to be determined by the teacher. All unexcused late work must be turned in prior to 1 week before the end of the term. One day of make-up time is allowed for every day of an excused absence for full credit.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

Students are welcomed and encouraged to participate in sports and after-school activities at their home school. Of course, eligibility rules are in effect for our students just as they apply to students in any school. TJD School will work with the home district to comply with eligibility rules.

## **Video and Audio Monitoring Systems**

\*\*\* Please refer to Home School's Student Handbook.

## **Phones / Electronic Devices**

Students are allowed to have cell phones, handheld video games and other electronic devices while on the bus ride to and from school. Upon entering the building, students will give phones / electronic devices to a staff member to be locked away during the school day. Use of these electronic devices during the school day is not permitted, unless otherwise specified by the building principal. Devices will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.

## **Search and Seizure**

As required by law, it is our responsibility to inform you in writing, of the following School Code (10-22.6) Section (e): [(e) To maintain order and security in the schools, school authorities may inspect and search places and areas such as lockers, desks, parking lots, and other school property and equipment owned or controlled by the school, as well as personal effects left in those places and areas by students, without notice or consent of the student and without a search warrant. As a matter of public policy, the General Assembly finds that students have no reasonable expectations of privacy in these places and areas or in their personal effects left in these places and areas. School authorities may request the assistance of law enforcement officials for the purpose of conducting inspections and searches of lockers, desks, parking lots, and other school property owned or controlled by the school for illegal drugs, weapons or other illegal or dangerous substances or materials, including searches conducted through the use of specially trained dogs. If a search conducted in accordance with this Section produces evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law, local ordinance or the school's policies or rules, such evidence may be seized by school authorities and disciplinary action may be taken. School authorities may also turn over such evidence to law enforcement authorities. The provisions of this subsection apply in all school districts, including special charter districts and districts organized under article 34.]

In order to help provide a safe environment for all, the staff, with the approval of the principal, will request that all students show the contents of their jackets, clothes, purses, bags, books, shoes, and socks to staff upon entry into the building. Students may also be asked to show the waistband of their pants.

To help ensure the safety and security of everyone in the building, the program may use a metal detecting wand. When used, the wand will be passed over the extremities and torso of students. If within a reasonable amount of time, a student refuses to cooperate with search procedures; this will constitute a reasonable cause that contraband or dangerous items are in the student's possession. If this occurs, the student will not be allowed to enter the classroom. Parents and possibly police will be notified.

## **School Dress Code / Student Appearance**

Students are expected to dress appropriately for school, so that appearance is not disruptive to the learning environment and is not a health or safety issue. In general, school attire will cover an individual's upper body and lower body from the top of the shoulders to the mid-thigh area.

The following items will be considered violations of school policy:

- Clothing must be opaque (not sheer)
- Clothing must overlap at the waist when students are standing, sitting, or participating in their daily routine.
- Clothing must not display racial or ethnic slurs; gang affiliations, obscene or sexually suggestive language or products which students may not legally buy.
- Hats, head coverings, sweatshirt hoods, and coats cannot be worn in the classroom / building unless permitted for religious or medical reasons. These items must be kept in the office on the carts.
- Pants are to be worn at the waist or hip level to prevent exposing undergarments.
- Clothing must have straps, a front, a back and sides that do not expose undergarments (bra straps may be visible, but bra cups and bra bands (front and back) may not).
- Street shoes are required. Bedroom slippers are prohibited.
- Any clothing item deemed a "distraction" to the learning environment by the administration will not be permitted.

## **Sexual Harassment Policies**

I. WHEN THE OFFENDER IS AN ADULT: Definition: Sexual harassment is any sexual behavior or inappropriate sexual comments from an adult towards a student. If you believe that you have been the victim of sexual harassment by an adult or if you have questions or concerns about this issue, seek the help of another adult whom you trust, such as a teacher, counselor, your parent or guardian or one of the building administrators. As soon as the Principal is advised of your concern, an investigation will be immediately conducted. If it is determined that an adult has sexually harassed a student, serious disciplinary action towards the adult may occur.

II. WHEN THE OFFENDER IS A STUDENT: Definition: Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention (verbal or physical) from anyone with whom the student may interact in the course of receiving an education in school or at school sponsored activities. If you believe that you have been the victim of sexual harassment by another student or if you have any questions about this issue, seek the help of an adult whom you trust, such as a teacher, counselor, your parent/guardian, or one of the building administrators. As soon as the Principal is advised of your concern, an investigation will be immediately conducted.

If it is determined, that a student has sexually harassed another student or staff member, the possible consequence to the offending student may include the following:

Parent Conference  
Apology to the Victim

Suspension/Expulsion  
Referral to the Police for Investigation

Reprisals, threats, or intimidation of the victim will be treated as serious offenses that could result in an external suspension or expulsion. In all cases, a high degree of confidentiality will be maintained by the school and school authorities to protect both the student and the victim.

### **Prevention and Response to Bullying, Intimidation or Harassment**

Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing to the School Complaint manager or any staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Anyone, including staff members and parents / guardians, who have information about actual or threatened bullying is encouraged to report it. Anonymous reports are also accepted.

Complaint Manager: Janine Huffman, Principal, 1261 IL Rte 38, Nachusa, IL 61057  
(815) 888-0002 [jhuffman@dps170.org](mailto:jhuffman@dps170.org)

Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the principal or other designee shall promptly inform parents / guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, other interventions, and restorative measures.

The TJD Principal or designee shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying by making reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date of the report of the incident of bullying was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying. Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights and providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the school administrator or designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

A retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. A student's act of retaliation will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences. A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences.

### **Gangs/ Gang Related Activity**

\*\*\* Please refer to Home School's Student Handbook.

Students in violation will be subject to disciplinary action by the Administration, including possible police involvement.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Students who are in violation of the laws governing the sale, possession, or use of drugs, alcohol, look alike drugs/alcohol or who are under the influence of or exhibit the odor of alcoholic beverages will be subject to action by administration. The school may authorize the search of the school and school grounds by local police and canine search teams. No student shall possess or have, under his/her control, any drug paraphernalia. This includes e-cigarettes and vaporizers. Drug paraphernalia shall include but not be limited to cigarette papers, pipes, holders of smoking materials of any types, cigarette rolling machines, and other items designed primarily for the smoking or ingestion of substances made illegal under any statute or of substances whose sale, gift, barter, or exchange is made unlawful under the tobacco accessories and Smoking Herbs Control Act, III. (Rev. Stat. CH 22, Paragraph 2358.1). Consequence - Confiscation of materials and referral for further consequences.

### **Leaving the Building / School Grounds**

Students are not permitted to leave TJD School grounds during the school day without an escort. If a junior high/high school student leaves the area without a staff member or parent, he/she is considered a "walk out". If a "walk-out" student remains on the campus, they will be monitored by TJD staff until they are ready to return inside the building and will be escorted to the appropriate area designated by staff. If the student leaves school grounds, parents will be contacted immediately, and the police will be notified that a student has left. If a "walk-out" student leaves and returns to the campus, he/she will be escorted to the appropriate area designated by staff. The parent may be requested to participate in a conference regarding the "walk-out".

## **Internet Acceptable Use**

\*\*\* Please refer to Home School's Student Handbook. TJD students will follow the District Policies regarding Internet usage.

**Thomas J Dempsey School**  
**Parental/Guardian Consent Form**

I, the legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent/agree to:  
Please **initial** consent(s) given:

- Permission to TJD School to use pictures and stories of my child for educational and informational purposes; that he/she may appear in news and yearbook; and that he/she may be identified by name.
- Permission to participate in planned field trips with the staff and children of TJD School. We shall not hold the staff responsible for accidents or injuries acquired during the field trips.
- Authorization to TJD School to secure such emergency medical care as my child might need while under its supervision. I agree to pay all costs of such emergency care and will not hold the TJD School or staff responsible for the same.
- I acknowledge that I am aware of the possibility of a search of my student and his/her possessions and give permission for staff to search my child and his/her possessions.
- TJD School has made me aware of the confidential nature of its services and its other clients, and I understand the confidential nature of certain client information. While I understand I have the right to speak to the media, I hereby discharge TJD School from any liability in the event that I disclose confidential information about myself or other clients of TJD School. I fully understand and will comply with this confidentiality agreement.
- I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the 2025-2026 handbook with an overview of the Behavior Management Procedures, including the use of physical restraint. I understand that I will be informed of any instances when physical restraint is used with my child.

Consent / agreement given above will last for the duration of the 2025-2026 school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Authorized Guardian**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student/Parent Handbook Acknowledgement and Pledge**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Acknowledgement and Pledge**

I acknowledge receiving and/or being provided electronic access to the Student/Parent Handbook and School Board policy on student behavior. I have read these materials and understand all rules, responsibilities, and expectations. In order to help keep my school safe, I pledge to adhere to all School and School District rules, policies and procedures. I have read and agreed to the TJD Level System of Rewards as stated in this handbook.

I understand that the Student/Parent Handbook and School District policies may be amended during the year and that such changes are available on the School District website or in the school office.

I understand that my failure to return this acknowledgement and pledge will not relieve me from being responsible for knowing or complying with School and School District rules, policies and procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge receiving and/or being provided electronic access to the Student/Parent Handbook and School Board policy on student behavior. I have read these materials and understand all rules, responsibilities, and expectations. I have read and agreed to the TJD Level System of Rewards as stated in this handbook.

I understand that the Student/Parent Handbook and School District policies may be amended during the year and that such changes are available on the School District website or in the school office.

I understand that my failure to return this acknowledgement will not relieve me or my child from being responsible for knowing or complying with School and School District rules, policies and procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date







