

# PEIRCE

## **Elementary School Guide for Parents**

**STRIVE TO SHINE: AS A STUDENT, AS A FRIEND**

**[www.peirceschool.info](http://www.peirceschool.info)**

85 Park Avenue Extension \* Arlington, MA 02474 \* 781-316-3736

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# Welcome to Peirce Elementary

Dear Parents and Members of the Peirce Community:

We are happy to provide you with this Peirce Elementary School Guide for Parents as a handy reference to important information as well as the policies and procedures of our school. It also highlights many of the aspects that make the Peirce community special. Please use this as a supplement to the Arlington Public Schools Elementary Handbook and Elementary Handbook Revisions 2010-2011 found on the Arlington Public Schools website.

Let me extend my hopes and wishes for a productive, safe, and healthy learning experience for your child(ren) here at Peirce School. I encourage you to visit my blog on the Peirce School PTO's webpage [www.peirceschool.info](http://www.peirceschool.info) for updates and insights into what's happening in our community. And, as always, feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Karen Hartley

*Principalkhartley@arlington.k12.ma.us*

## Perseverance

To keep at it despite difficulties

## Effort

To try your hardest in all you do

## Integrity

To behave in a truthful and thoughtful way

## Responsibility

To be accountable for your actions

## Cooperation

To work together in a considerate manner

## Excellence

To be the best you can be

## Peirce School Mission Statement

Peirce School works to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which students strive for academic excellence. It is our goal that staff, parents and students treat each other with mutual respect and feel a sense of community. By working together, we aim to prepare students to be capable, caring, responsible, and industrious citizens in a diverse, multicultural world.

In order to achieve the school's mission, it is essential that parents, teachers and school staff work together to help students develop academic and social skills that foster confidence and build self-esteem. We expect that students will be active participants in realizing the school's mission by striving for academic achievement and by being accountable for their actions.

### **We, as the Peirce community of staff, parents and students will:**

- respect ourselves and the rights, feelings and property of others
- cooperate and be considerate of others in words and actions
- be honest and responsible for our actions
- be caring, courteous and helpful to others
- act as positive role models for students and our peers
- support each other in our efforts to learn and teach

### **We, as teachers, staff and parents, will teach students to:**

- honor and celebrate each other's individuality
- show respect for others regardless of our differences
- take responsibility for our actions and learning
- develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships
- develop positive ways to resolve conflicts
- support one another to accomplish the school mission

## Communication

At Peirce School, we realize that communication between parents and teachers is crucial to providing students with a positive educational experience. We keep parents informed about school events through paper notices sent home in student's folders, e-bulletins (the "Daily Bulletin", and monthly PTO meetings.

Peirce's Curriculum Afternoon, which takes place during the first month of school, gives parents a chance to meet their child(ren)'s teachers and gives teachers an opportunity to open the line of communication.

Good communication also requires that parents have information about what happens in the classroom. It is important for children to discuss their school experience with their parents. Parents can help by asking questions, looking over schoolwork, and making sure homework is done properly. Parents are invited to set up special conferences at any time to discuss their child(ren)'s progress with their teachers.

## School Information-District Wide

.....for General Information pertaining to Arlington schools such as;

- Open Enrollment
- District Calendar including dates for early dismissals
- School Hours
- Attendance Policy
- Inclement Weather
- Religious Observances
- Family Vacations
- Field Trips
- Lunch Programs/Free and Reduced Lunch
- Student Insurance Program
- Visitors and Criminal Offender Record Information (C.O.R.I.) Requirements
- Emergency Operations Plans and Drills
- Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Health and Wellness Information
- Curriculum, Assessments and Progress Reports
- Additional Programs
- Student Support Services
- Parent Involvement
- Community Resources

### **Arlington Public Schools Elementary Handbook**

*[http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/eforms/parent\\_forms/Elementary\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/eforms/parent_forms/Elementary_Handbook.pdf)*

## Safe Phone

**(781) 316-3298**

### What is Safe Phone?

Safe Phone is a confidential voice mailbox accessed only by staff personnel. Please leave information about your child's absence that would be helpful for the school to know, especially regarding contagious illnesses (e.g. flu, head lice, pink eye, strep throat, etc.).

#### NOTE:

This is not the mailbox in which to leave information for a classroom teacher. For all other concerns, call the school's main number, (781) 316-3736

## Allergy Policy

We strive to make Peirce a healthy, safe place for all students. At lunch, we offer a "nut-free" table, where any child whose lunch is nut-free may eat. All lunches sold in the cafeteria are nut-free.

Peirce adheres to the Arlington Public Schools' allergy policy, which can be found at:

[www.arlington.k12.ma.us/departments/nursing/allergypolicy.pdf](http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/departments/nursing/allergypolicy.pdf)

## School Information-Peirce

### Safe Phone/Alert NOW

ALERT NOW - The town of Arlington participates in the automated phone system ALERT NOW. In cases of school closings and other emergency announcements, all parents and guardians (up to 10 different phone numbers) will be called automatically. Incoming Peirce families receive a notice to submit their information for input into the system.

### Lunch & Snacks

Students have a 40-minute lunch and play period, which is supervised by lunch aides. Lunch aides help at lunchtime and supervise (or even participate in) playground activities, such as basketball and kickball.

Students have the option of bringing lunch from home or purchasing lunch at school. A hot lunch is available at a set cost. The current lunch menu is posted on the Peirce website (<http://peirceschool.info/lunch/>). Students can decide on a daily basis whether to buy lunch based on the menu choices for that day.

Most classes also have a designated snack time during the day (this varies by grade). Please send your child(ren) to school with nutritious snacks.

### Extended Day Program at Peirce

Peirce is home to an on-site Extended Day program, Mrs. T's Playcare.

Hours are 7:15-8:15 a.m. and 2:00-6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For more information, please contact Mrs. Jane Torregrossa directly at: 781-316-3742 or visit the Peirce website (<http://peirceschool.info/after-school-programs/>) where you will find information about this on-site program as well as other off-site alternatives.

### Classroom Placement

Each spring, teachers meet with the principal to discuss classroom placement. They take into account each child's academic performance, social development, need for special services and learning style.

Class lists are composed with the goal of creating well-balanced classes in which each child will thrive. All final placement decisions are made by the school principal.

## Special Services & Programs

Peirce students have access to all of the Arlington school system's educational services, including the following:

- Art enrichment
- English Language Learners (ELL) program
- Instrumental music instruction
- Reading resources teacher
- Education specialists
- Speech/Language pathologist
- Title 1 assistance

There are several programs that are available to Peirce students and are not found at every elementary school in Arlington. These include Inclusion Classrooms, METCO and Open Circle.

### Inclusion Classrooms

In 2010, Arlington Public Schools consolidated all Inclusion Classrooms, district-wide, at Peirce. One definition or description of the program is as follows:

“Inclusion education is the act of including all students in a class or school setting, no matter what their strengths or weaknesses are in any area. Students with disabilities, whether physical or mental, are included in the description of inclusion education. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, made it clear with their amendments in 1997 that all schools need to provide inclusion education to all children who suffer from disabilities.

IDEA was amended in 2004, however, and states that inclusion is not now a requirement. It does state that the law requires that any child with a disability must be educated in the most appropriate and less restrictive environment that meets their individual needs”. All students who are determined to be able to benefit from an inclusion setting are placed in co-taught classrooms. That is, each Inclusion Classroom at Peirce is co-taught with a team of general and special education teachers and additional aides if needed working as a team. In 2011, each grade level at Peirce will have both a general education classroom and an inclusion classroom.

### Special Programs at Peirce

*For more information about any of these programs, please contact your child/ren's teacher or visit the Arlington Public Schools' Web site at:*  
[www.arlington.k12.ma.us/home/](http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/home/)

## Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)

Peirce School participates in the METCO program, which is run by a nonprofit organization whose goal is to place minority children from metropolitan Boston schools into suburban schools. The purpose of METCO is to attempt to racially balance suburban schools, while enriching the host community by providing exposure to other cultures.

METCO seeks to break down commonly held stereotypes while providing a quality education to Boston children. There is no cost to Boston families, and parents of METCO children are encouraged to participate in any and all Peirce School functions. If you are interested in hosting a METCO student for after school activities see, <http://peirceschool.info/>.

## Open Circle

At Peirce, the Open Circle program is a central component of the social and emotional learning that happens at school. Geared toward helping children develop positive relationships with their peers, Open Circle provides a framework for fostering a nurturing school community.

Open Circle is a year-long part of the Peirce curriculum, with lessons generally taught for 15-30 minutes a week in a special class meeting known as Open Circle — a name that describes how students and teachers arrange their chairs including an extra seat for anyone who wishes to join.

**You can find out more about Open Circle at: [www.open-circle.org](http://www.open-circle.org)**

### **Key themes of Open Circle include:**

- listening
- calming down
- speaking up
- dealing with teasing
- recognizing discrimination
- expressing anger appropriately
- problem solving

## In-School Volunteering

Peirce School gladly welcomes parent participation. Many in-school volunteer opportunities are available, from assisting students with arts & crafts projects to reading aloud. Please check with your child/ren's teacher to see how your skills could be put to use in your child/ren's classroom!

For the safety of our students, all volunteers must complete a **CORI form** prior to volunteering. Please ask at the main office for more details.

# Safety

## Driving to School

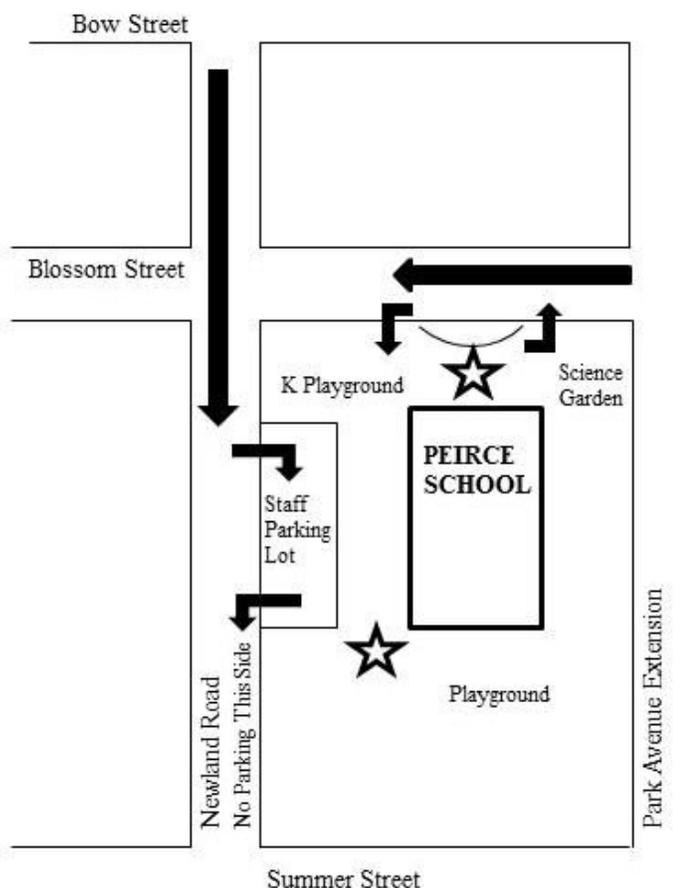
When driving your child/ren to and from school, please use caution and follow the Peirce traffic flow map called “Stop Drop & Roll” whenever possible. Please note: There is no parking or idling on Park Avenue Extension.

## Walking to School

Peirce School encourages all of its students to walk to school as often as possible. Parents should walk with children, at least initially, to point out traffic signals and crosswalks.

## Pets on School Grounds

For safety and health reasons, parents and children are reminded that pets are not allowed on school property at any time, including at both drop-off and pick-up times.



## “Stop, Drop and Roll”

- On school days, treat Newland Road as one-way from Bow to Summer Streets
- On school days, treat Blossom Street as one-way from Park Avenue Extension to Newland Road
- Remember: the drop-off area at the front of the school is a one-way loop. Enter at the driveway closest to Blossom Street and exit from the driveway closest to Summer Street
- There is NO PARKING on the east or school side of Newland Road

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# Screen time policy

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At Peirce Elementary School, we strive to make the most of every school day. This philosophy extends to the use of media in the schools as required under the Massachusetts Department of Education's Frameworks.

## **Movies/Television:**

Careful consideration is given to every program or movie shown during school hours. The faculty and staff strive to use television or movie screen time to promote academics, citizenship and community, utilizing educational movies and programs that, ideally, have a substantive connection to the curriculum. All movies shown at Peirce will be age appropriate based on standardized rating systems. If a teacher chooses to show a program, or a portion of a program, that is intended for older audiences, or is not rated, that teacher will contact parents and, if necessary, allow children to opt out of viewing the film.

## **Computer/Screen time:**

Computer screen time is given equal consideration at Peirce. Students will use computers to advance their technological skills pertinent to becoming learners in the 21st Century. They will also use computers to advance academic skills.

Computer or other screen time also may be used as rewards or incentives on occasion for individuals or groups of students at the teachers' discretion.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's individual teacher, specialist or main office with any questions.

# PTO at Peirce

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The Peirce School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) organizes most of the fundraising and special events at Peirce. Parents and teachers are strongly encouraged to join the PTO and become active members.

## 1. Dues/donations

Every school year families are asked to make a donation to the PTO through the annual fund drive. Keep in mind, all donations are tax deductible!

## 2. Fundraisers

Throughout the year, the PTO sponsors a variety of fundraisers, with an emphasis on fun community events rather than traditional fundraising products. A list of the planned fundraisers is included on the PTO calendar. We encourage you and your family and friends to support these events.

The PTO manages a number of programs that with a little time and effort provide a lot of revenue for our school without dipping into your pockets. With products you have already purchased for your home, you can:

- Clip BoxTops4Education coupons (we earn 10 cents/coupon)
- Clip Tyson A+ Labels (we earn 24 cents/label)
- Clip Campbell's Labels (we earn equipment for our school)
- Recycle used ink cartridges and cell phones (we earn cash)
- Drop Off Your Unwanted Books to Peirce School's Library (we either use or redeem at the Book Rack for in store credits)
- Shop using BoxTops4Education website (we earn cash)
- Join Menotomy Beer & Wine's Wine Club (we earn cash)

## 3. Grants

Some of the PTO committees seek grant money to support the enrichment activities of the PTO. In years past, these have included a grant from the Arlington Educational Enrichment Fund to subsidize some of the Science Garden activities and one from Cambridge Savings Bank to bring the Mass Audubon Society's science enrichment programs to the school.

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## Where does PTO money go?

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PTO funds help cover the costs of enrichment needs for Peirce students, teachers, and families that are not covered under the Arlington Public Schools' budget. The PTO budget gets voted on annually with the goal to best meet the current needs of the school. At the beginning of the school year, the PTO typically provides a classroom supplies budget to each teacher and specialist.

The PTO sponsors a variety of enrichment activities, including: theater, live music, and dance performances, animal encounters, and author visits. For field trips, the PTO usually subsidizes the cost of the bus. The PTO sponsors social activities such as Popcorn Fridays, Movie Nights, and Ice-cream Socials to bring the Peirce community together.

The library is always in need of new and updated materials. Enhancing the collection is a priority for the PTO.

Getting all Peirce teachers trained in "Open Circle" has been a focus of the PTO for the last few years. Open Circle provides the school community with a way to encourage positive behavior and a common language and structure for dealing with discipline issues.

For more details on the PTO and its activities, please come to one of our monthly meetings. We'd love to have you join us!

## PTO Meetings

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PTO meeting nights vary from year to year, but typically occur once monthly from 6:30-8:00 pm in the Library.

Co-presidents facilitate the meetings, with a portion of the meeting dedicated to a prepared agenda and another portion for questions/ open discussion. Committee heads and teachers report on and evaluate past activities, and discuss current and upcoming activities' needs. Although members are encouraged to attend as many meetings as possible, attendance is not required.

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# Advisory Council

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The Peirce School Advisory Council is a representative, school-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers, and community members. School Councils were established by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act to improve and provide support for public schools. The School Council acts under the supervision of the Arlington School Committee.

The School Council members are elected to fixed terms, with members elected by the parents at Peirce School for two year terms and teachers elected by teachers at Peirce School for two year terms.

The School Council is charged with planning, goal setting, and budgeting for improvements at Peirce. Specific responsibilities of the Peirce School Council include:

- adopting educational goals for the school that are consistent with local educational policies and statewide student performance standards
- identifying the educational needs of students attending the school
- formulating a school improvement plan

Meetings of the Council are public, and all interested members of the Peirce community may attend.

# Technology Committee

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In 2011, the Advisory Council has initiated a new Technology Committee that will report directly to the principal and Council on a regular basis. Its members are charged with surveying both the technology needs and offerings at the school, and assessing how Peirce can better integrate technology resources at the curriculum level for all students.