



2022-2023

**Cottonwood  
Elementary School**

**Parent-Student  
Handbook**

# PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This Parent-Student handbook is prepared as a guide to acquaint families and students with the policies and the routines of the school. If questions arise as it is read, please call either the school or the County Superintendent.

After reading the handbook, students and parents sign the form on the last page indicating that students and parents have read, understand the policies and guidelines, and agree to abide by them.

Parents are to provide transportation to and from school or to a designated bus stop. Teachers must be given written information if anyone other than the parent is to transport student's home from school.

## **DISTRICT GOALS**

Board of Trustees for District #57 selected the following goals as a framework for its academic program:

1. Develop habits that will insure a high level of physical, mental and emotional health throughout each student's lifetime.
2. Develop a moral and ethical values system to serve as a basis for personal decision-making.
3. Develop basic fundamental skills that will enable each student to earn a livelihood, participate in the democratic process, and function as a member of a family, community and larger society.
4. Develop attitudes and competencies that will enable each to enjoy leisure time.
5. Develop attitudes and gain knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and the arts.

## **ATTENDANCE**

The 202-23 school year starts August 15, 2022 and ends May 25, 2023. There are 153 instruction days and 5 pupil instruction related days. Students are expected to arrive on time on a regular and consistent basis.

The following official holidays will be observed:

Labor Day-	September 5, 2022
Thanksgiving-	November 24, 2022
Christmas-	December 25, 2022
New Year's Day-	January 1, 2023

Vacation days during the school year are:

Thanksgiving -	November 24-25, 2022
Christmas -	December 19, 2022 - January 1, 2023
Easter Break -	April 7-10, 2023

**Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held after school or evenings. Each teacher will set up classroom parents' schedule. In the case of an on-going emergency, Parent/Teacher Conferences may be conducted remotely via technology or postponed.

**Staff Development Days:** The following staff development days are scheduled:

August 12-12, 2022

October 20-22, 2022

April 20, 2023

May 25, 2023

## **ABSENCES AND RECORDING ATTENDANCE**

**Reporting Absences:** When a student must be absent, it is necessary to notify the school before 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence.

**Excused Absences:** Absences will be considered reasonable in cases of illness, bereavement, medical appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of the school day, family vacations (no more than five days per semester), and emergencies.

**Unexcused Absences:** Unexcused absences occur when a student does not have a legitimate reason for being absent. Students will not get credit for work missed during unexcused absences nor will teachers be required to provide make-up work. Unexcused absences will be a significant factor when making decisions concerning retention.

**Excessive Absences:** Excessive absences occur when a student is absent more than ten (10) days in a semester. A recurrence of excessive absences during a school year will jeopardize the student's academic standing. Chronic absences will be investigated by Administration and, if necessary, the services of the County Attorney.

**Attendance During On-Going Emergency:** During an on-going emergency requiring the use of remote learning, students will attend class using appropriate technology. In the event of remote learning, students will be required to check in at 8:15 each morning via e-mailing their teacher. E-mails time-marked after 8:20 am will be considered 'tardy' and e-mails time-marked after 9:00 am will be considered a half day absence. Students must submit evidence of work completed for the day in order to be considered present.

**Early Departures:** Repeated early departures (more than 3 during a period of 9 weeks) are not acceptable and will be considered in the category of excessive absences.

**Tardy:** A student is considered tardy if not in their seat or logged on in a remote learning situation and prepared for instruction five minutes after the bell is rung: morning, recess, and noon and p.m. recess. A maximum of three tardies will be excused for each period for unavoidable circumstances. Each additional three tardies will be counted as a full-day absence and will be included in the absence total for the month.

## **TIME SCHEDULE**

### **Cottonwood West:**

Class begins: 7:55 a.m. Dismissal: 3:30 p.m.

Bus Stops: Morning First Lutheran Preschool **LEAVES at 7:35 a.m.**

Afternoon Parents pickup at the West School at 3:30 p.m.

### **Cottonwood North:**

Class begins: 8:40 a.m. Dismissal: 4:15 p.m.

Bus Stops: Morning First Lutheran Preschool **LEAVES at 8:04 a.m.**

Afternoon First Lutheran Preschool **DROP OFF: 4:40 p.m.**

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Severe weather conditions, loss of electricity or water, or any other situation may arise that will affect student health or safety. Should this happen, it may become necessary to dismiss students early. Therefore, since many parents work, it is important for parents to leave alternate phone numbers with the teachers in order to send notification about any changes in each classroom's schedule.

Staff is forbidden to release students to other individuals without parent permission. It is necessary to give the name or names of others who are designated by parents to pick up your child when you are not able to do so. Staff will not be able to leave the building until all students have left as their responsibility for students increases parents' responsibility in times of emergency to relieve them as quickly as possible.

## **TEXTBOOKS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Students will be supplied with books at the beginning of school. No deposit is required for any books issued, but students are responsible for keeping these books in the same condition as issued and returning them at the end of the year. The value of each book is determined by its condition when issued. Fines will be assessed according to loss or damage. Records will not be transferred if fines are outstanding.

At times students may be supplied with electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets or technology boosting equipment to use at home. In order to issue a student a school-owned electronic device, parents and students must complete and sign paperwork assuming liability for such device and guaranteeing parent/student will follow school guidelines regarding appropriate use of technology and assume the cost of repairing and/or replacing damaged or missing devices and/or programming.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework is assigned only when a student does not complete classroom assignments or when it may be necessary to reinforce a skill taught during the day. Home work is due when school begins the following morning.

In the event of illness, a student has one day per each day of absence to complete and turn in homework assignments.

If students will be absent for an extended period, they must complete all assignments as arranged with the classroom teacher.

## **DRESS CODE**

Students are expected to dress comfortably as a young student at all times: Jeans, shirts tucked into pants or at least covering the midriff, dresses, tennis shoes or other proper footwear. During fall and spring, shorts – length to knees may also be worn. Flip flops are not appropriate.

Intermediate grade students especially grades 6-8 are not allowed to use cosmetics during school hours.

Appropriate warm clothing during winter months and rain gear during spring and fall: Warm coats, hats, mittens, overshoes. Students may remain indoors whenever the weather is below zero whether by actual degrees or by chill factor. Students without appropriate clothing may have to remain indoors or on deck during recesses. This may affect a student's general health as outdoor exercise and fresh air are both stimulating and physically energizing.

Students are required to wear shoes **at all times** because of laws governing fires and emergency evacuation of public buildings. When students wear snow boots, another pair of shoes must be available to wear in the classroom.

## **STUDENT HEALTH**

**Emergency Information:** In case of emergency, each student is required to have on file at the school a personal emergency information sheet. This sheet lists the names of a parent(s) or guardian, complete and up-to-date home address and phone number, and an address and home phone number of a friend or relative, physician's name and phone number, and medical alert information.

**Permanent Records:** Students' permanent record must contain an up-to-date immunization report.

**New Students:** Kindergarten students or newly admitted students may not attend until this information is given to the school.

**Illness at School or Injury:** A sick child does not function well in the classroom. If your child has a fever, does not feel well, or is affected by a family crisis such as an accident or death, the student should not be in school.

In case of an onset of illness or injury, school staff will temporarily provide care—**first aid only**. If emergency medical treatment is necessary, parents will be immediately contacted. If parents cannot be reached, emergency number given for the student will be called. Emergency measures will be taken until other authorization is received.

**Medicine:** Prescription and non-prescription medicines may be given at school **ONLY** when accompanied by a physician's order/permission form. Forms are available at the school office. (See Medication Policy, pages 14-15).

**Emergency Treatment Policy – Agreement:** If emergency treatment is required, and the parent/s or legal guardian cannot be reached immediately, your signature in the space provided below empowers the school to exercise judgment to provide first aid and/or calling the physician/dentist indicated on the information form. In addition, if parents are not available to transport their student to a hospital emergency room, parent signature in the space provided on the Handbook signature page authorizes the transport of your child to a hospital emergency room. Your signature is not sufficient for the release of confidential information protected by federal law.

### **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Fire, earthquake, intruder, tornado, and other safety drills are conducted periodically. Detailed plans are posted inside the door of each classroom.

### **INTERNET POLICY – AGREEMENT**

The district provides all students with access to the Internet. However, there are certain restrictions and rules governing this accessibility. Failure to abide by these rules will restrict access or eliminate it through a case by case decision. Please review the following very carefully. Parent and student signatures on the sign-off page indicate understanding and acceptance of these rules:

- a) Acceptable Use – To support education and research
- b) Network Etiquette – be polite, use appropriate language
- c) Do not reveal personal information
- d) Vandalism or misuse is a major infraction of rules.
- e) Students will not be allowed to log on without teacher supervision
- f) Students may not access another student's work.

### **PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF STUDENTS**

From time to time still pictures or video images are taken of students for school related projects including the newspaper, web site content and student teaching activities by students from MSU-N. Your child's image may appear in one of these pictures or video tapes. If you would prefer that efforts be made to prevent your child from being videotaped or photographed in this

process, please contact your child's teacher. **You are more than welcome to take pictures of your own child, but we request that you do NOT take pictures of other students to post on social media sites.**

### **SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

School Board meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month. The 2022-23 meetings will be held in North or West School, alternating every meeting, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Board meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend. In an on-going emergency, board meetings may be held virtually.

Agenda items are to be given to the Clerk of the District seven days prior to the Board meeting.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

If a parent has a complaint about classroom or playground practices, the procedure is as follows:

- a. Contact the classroom teacher and arrange for a conference.
- b. Trustees have adopted policy #1700 Uniform Complaint Procedure. If directly speaking to the teacher does not give desired results, persons may proceed to file a complaint with the board according to policy #1700. (See Page 10.)

### **TELEPHONE AND CELL PHONE USE**

School telephones are primarily business phones and must be used as such. Parents should feel free to call the school anytime and messages will be delivered to the child or teacher. Please do not ask teachers or children to come to the phone during the time that school is in session, except in an emergency.

Cell phones brought to school by students must be turned off and left in lockers during school hours. Students may not use them without permission and they may be confiscated by teachers if students violate policy.

### **STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

One of the most important lessons education programs should convey is to teach self-discipline. While it does not appear as a subject, it underlies the whole educational structure.

If repeated efforts to solve a problem are unsuccessful, temporary exclusion from the school building, classes or special activities known as suspension may be necessary. Suspension has as its primary purpose the removal of a student from an untenable situation and to provide time for the student, parents and professional staff to reach a satisfactory solution to the problem. Suspension shall be as brief as possible and will not exceed ten (10) consecutive days. Suspension may be in-school, isolated from other students, but under supervision or out-of-school suspension.

Only the School Board can expel students.



The following general rules apply to all behavior at school, on field trips, or on school provided transportation. Students should keep in mind these three behavior codes in their association with district staff or other students:

- a. *Safety:* *Is it safe?*
- b. *Courtesy:* *Is it courteous? Does it respect the rights of others?*
- c. *Appropriate:* *Is it appropriate? Does it maintain an environment conducive to learning?*

### **STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Any district employee has the authority to hold a pupil to strict accountability for disorderly conduct at school-related functions, on the way to or from school, on school grounds or transportation areas.

Each classroom teacher is free to establish classroom rules that are suitable for the grade and student composite. All classroom property including desks and lockers may be inspected by teachers at any time.

Following are general rules of conduct expected by School Board Members for the welfare of all students and staff:

**Major Offenses** include, but are not limited to:

- a. Hitting or physical abuse
- b. Throwing rocks, sticks, snowballs, etc.
- c. Defiance of authority including rude caustic or sarcastic comments
- d. Swearing or abusive language
- e. Continuous disruptive behavior (talking out or being impolite)
- f. Stealing school property or stealing from other students or staff
- g. Destruction of school property
- h. Intimidation of other students or school personnel: Intimidation (bullying) is purposely causing another to feel timid or frightened.
- i. Wooden and metal bats and hardball are not allowed on the playground.
- j. Knockdown and tackle games are too rough and disallowed.

Parents will be notified about Major Offenses with a written citation and a telephone call. Students will be allowed to return to school when parents have signed and returned the citation. Three Major offenses will equal one Severe Offense.

**Severe Offenses** include, but may not be limited to:

- a. Assault: A person commits assault if he or she causes bodily injury to another, makes physical contact of an

insulting or provoking nature or causes reasonable apprehension of bodily injury to another.

- b. Possession of or threats involving weapons
- c. Possession of or use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

Severe Offenses will result in automatic suspension and possible expulsion. Suspension will require a parent/student/teacher/administrator conference for re-admittance to the classroom. The conference will also include a contract and/or a behavior management plan. All Severe Offenses are illegal under Montana State or Federal law and may result in immediate notification of legal authorities.

### **PLAYGROUND RULES**

Students can get appropriate exercise and learn important social skills when playing in a safe and courteous manner. The rules are explained to students at the beginning of the year, and they are posted in each classroom.

Students play in a safe and courteous manner when the following rules are observed:

- 1. Respect the rights and feelings of others (name calling and teasing are not acceptable.)
- 2. All students must be included in games if they choose to play.
- 3. Swings:
  - a. Twisting or doubles not permitted
  - b. Underdogs not permitted
  - c. Sit on swings (no standing or kneeling)
  - d. Do not jump from swings
- 4. Do not stand at the bottom of a slide
  - a. Do not jump from slides
  - b. One person at a time
- 5. Sit only on teeter totters
- 6. Keep feet and hands inside merry-go-rounds
- 7. Use jump ropes ONLY for jumping
- 8. Stay out of traffic areas

### **HARASSMENT**

The District prohibits harassment or intimidation of its employees or students, whether committed by a co-worker, supervisor, contractor, volunteer, student or parent and finds such behavior just cause for disciplinary action.

### **DETENTION**

Detention period is a time when a student is assigned to stay after school for any infraction of classroom or general behavior guidelines. Students should fully understand that any teacher or aide in the school has the authority to correct misconduct and may assign detention to a student who is in violation of acceptable behavior codes.

Detention will not be assigned on the day of the infraction. Parents will be notified by phone or a note that is to be signed and returned each time detention is assigned to a student.

When or if a student has accumulated 15 detention hours, student will be suspended from school for a period of three days. A suspended student and parents will be asked to meet with the School Board prior to re-admittance.

Academic detention will be handled by the classroom teacher and will not lead to suspension.

## **DUE PROCESS**

All citizens are guaranteed due process by the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Montana. Schools have a dual responsibility. Children must be educated about rights and responsibilities and they must be shown by words and actions that this system does work through the resolution of complaints.

### **Uniform Complaint Procedure**

**1700**

The board establishes this Uniform Complaint Procedure as a means to address complaints arising within the District. This Uniform Complaint Procedure is intended to be used for all complaints except those governed by a collective bargaining agreement.

The District requests all individuals to use this complaint procedure, when the individual believes the Board or its employees or agents have violated the individual's rights under: 1) Montana constitutional, statutory, or administrative law; 2) United States constitutional, statutory, or regulatory law; 3) Board policy.

The District will endeavor to respond to and resolve complaints without resorting to this formal complaint procedure and, when a complaint is filed, to address the complaint promptly and equitably. The right of a person to prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint filed hereunder will not be impaired by a person's pursuit of other remedies. Use of this complaint procedure does not extend any filing deadline related to pursuit of other remedies.

The Board has the authority to contract with an independent investigator at any time during the complaint procedure process. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of the Board's receipt of the independent investigator's report and recommendation, the Board will respond to the complaint and take such administrative steps as the Board deems appropriate and necessary.

#### **Level 1: Informal**

Any individual with a complaint is first encouraged to discuss it with the teacher, with the objective of resolving the matter promptly and informally. An exception is that a complaint of sexual harassment should be discussed directly with the County Superintendent.

#### **Level 2: Board**

When a complaint has not been or cannot be resolved at Level 1, an individual may file a signed and dated written complaint stating: 1) the nature of the complaint; 2) a description of the event or incident giving rise to the complaint, including any school personnel involved; and 3) the remedy or resolution requested. This written complaint must be filed

within thirty (30) calendar days of the event or incident or from the date an individual could reasonably become aware of such event or incident.

Upon written appeal, the Board will consider the decision in Level 1. Upon receipt of written request for appeal, the Chair will place the appeal on the agenda of a regular or special Board meeting. The Board will report its decision on the appeal, in writing, to all parties, within thirty (30) calendar days of the Board meeting at which the Board considered the appeal. A decision of the Board is final, unless it is appealed pursuant to Montana law within the period provided by law.

#### **Level 3: County Superintendent**

When a matter falls within the jurisdiction of a county superintendent of schools, the decision of the Board may be

appealed to the county superintendent by filing a written appeal within (30) calendar days of the Board's decision, pursuant to Montana law.

### **FEDERAL FUNDS**

The federal government, through the Title program and REAP (Rural Education Initiative), provides dollars to pay for supplemental services and materials. It is expected that these funds will be spent to provide the "extras" to enable Districts to meet AYP. Funds may be spent for any activity approved by the rules and regulations of any Title Fund. These are as follows:

Title I: Services and/or resources for students who are from low economic areas and are two or more years below grade level. Receipt of funds is determined by population census and having at least 10 students.

Title II: Funds are to be used for staff development activities designed to upgrade Instructional skills in the areas of reading and math.

REAP: May be used for any activity listed above.

*Parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of all classroom teachers in Cottonwood Schools.*

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Special education services are provided to students when it has been determined through testing that the student has a deficit that is preventing learning from taking place. This deficit may be physical, emotional or mental but must be diagnosed by one specially trained to administer special tests. The school district utilizes services of Bear Paw Cooperative to provide special education services.

The referral process includes a team effort of teachers, parents and paraprofessionals to initiate testing processes.

Special Education regulations also provide parents with rights and the district or specialist with responsibilities. Parents have the right to:

- a) To review all records related to the referral for evaluation.
- b) Review procedures and instruments used in the evaluation.
- c) To refuse to permit the evaluation (in which case the local District can request a hearing.
- d) To be fully informed about the results of the evaluation.
- e) To get an independent evaluation either from another public agency with the fee determined by a sliding scale and the consent of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or privately, at parent's expense.
- f) A student's placement or education status will not be changed without parents' knowledge and consent.
- g) Child Study Team or Individual Education Plan meetings may

be conducted only with parents present. Exception may be if the District has tried three times to set the time and place for the meeting at parents' convenience.

- h) All notices, letters, etc. must be in the language of the home or presented by an individual who can speak the language of the home.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**School Pictures:** Individual student pictures or class pictures will be taken in the fall. Charges for pictures must be paid in advance. Parents will be notified.

**Health Records:** Documentation of immunizations is required before a student may attend school. A list of required immunizations is available from the county health department. Section 20-5-403, Montana Codes Annotated allow parents to file for an exemption through legal process for medical and religious by completing specific forms prior to attendance. Montana immunization and health forms are required for all kindergarten students and all students transferring from schools outside of Montana. These records become a part of the student's permanent record.

**School Records:** A confidential cumulative record of your child's academic progress is maintained. The records are open only to parents, teachers and administrators involved in the education of each child.

**Notices:** Notices will be sent home with students or, depending upon the issue, mailed directly to the parents. Check in your students' book bags or what ever is used to carry lunches for such notices or corrected homework.

**School Grounds:** Once students are brought to the school they are not permitted to leave for any reason unless accompanied by parent or school personnel.

**Social Events:** Three social events are generally celebrated during the school year: Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine's Day. Birthday celebrations may be held and may include treats provided by parents. However, all treats must be purchased by a bakery or other such establishment.

**Show and Tell:** Students may only bring inexpensive toys to school. Jack knives, squirt guns, or similar toys may **NOT** be brought to school at any time. Live animals may be brought for show and tell only if parents bring the pet and remain during show & tell and immediately take it home. Please check with the teacher before bringing live animals.

Books brought from home must have the student's or family's name written inside the cover to determine ownership. Expensive toys, i.e., iPads, computers, game boys, radios, video games, etc. may not be brought to school under any circumstances.

**Parent Involvement:** The team effort of educators and parents produces astonishing results. One of the District's major goals is to closely involve parents in the education program. Hopefully, arrangements can be made to provide a variety of programs designed to support the parenting role. Parents are encouraged to advise Board members or staff what programs are available that will provide the most valuable information and how these materials would best be disseminated.

**Lunch:** Students must bring lunches to school with them. Lunches will be placed in the school's refrigerator if needed. There is a microwave, stove and oven available to heat food. Staff will be available to provide assistance with lunch preparations. During an on-going emergency due to contagious disease, kitchen privileges may be suspended.

**Free/Reduced Meal Forms:** All parents will be issued a free/reduced meal form on the first day of school. Even though the district does not provide a hot lunch program, this form is very important because it serves to document the level of financial support for telephone and internet services. The milk program is also provided through this program. This information is kept confidential. The only person to review the information is the County Superintendent. Please return forms to the classroom teacher in a sealed envelope. Parents who do not wish to provide requested information just need to return the form.

**Student Grade Reports:** Grades reports are issued four times each year as well as mid-term grade reports. The first quarterly report will be issued sometime near the first of November. Parent/Teacher conferences will be held at the same time. Parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with the teacher and/or County Superintendent. It is important to call first to let each know what time is convenient.

**Library Instruction and Counselors:** Trustees have contracted with qualified staff to provide library instruction as well as counseling on a monthly basis. District staff will arrange work schedules for the school year.

**Volunteers:** All parents are encouraged to visit classrooms and, if possible, serve as volunteers who may assist to provide extra instruction to students who may have difficulty grasping a taught skill. Parents who are skillful in using computers, have music or art talents, or have time to serve as field trip chaperones are an added bonus. However, it is important to let teachers know in advance about plans to volunteer. Together teachers and parents can work out a plan for shared time which will be advantageous to students and adults. In whatever way you choose to help, please know that your contribution to Cottonwood School will be greatly appreciated.

**Asbestos Notification:** Cottonwood Elementary School Buildings do not contain any known harmful levels of asbestos materials in the Classroom Building, Resource Building or any out buildings used for storage. All materials used in any construction will be checked with suppliers to make sure no asbestos material is used. If you have any questions or want a copy of the management plan, please call the District Clerk.

## **ILLNESS/COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

A sick child does not function well in a classroom; cannot participate in some activities; cannot be left without supervision; and, may cause others to become ill. If your child has a fever, does not feel well or is affected by emotional trauma caused by an accident, family death, or other situation that prevents focusing on studies, your child should not be in school. Please call the school to explain the circumstances and arrange for school work to be sent home. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

The administering of any medication is not the function of the Cottonwood School.

**Non-Prescription Medications:** As a basic rule, no students will be given any non-prescription medications by any staff members without the expressed written consent of the parents or legal guardians.

**Prescription Medications:** Special circumstances may require the school to support physicians and parents or legal guardians in the administration of prescribed medications. When such circumstances arise, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

1. A written authorization from the student's physician must be presented. This authorization must include: name of student, date, name of medication, time schedule for administration, dosage and possible side effects and a termination date, and only oral medication will be given.
2. A written authorization from the student's parents or legal guardian to give the medication and a release from all liability in connection with the administration of the medication, shall be signed by the Teacher-in-Charge and parents or legal guardians.
3. Medication should be delivered to the Teacher-in-Charge by the parents or legal guardians.
4. The medications must be in the container from the pharmacy, with the name of the student, date, name of drug, dosage and the name of the physician. Medication will not be accepted in any other container.
5. A log or written record should be kept with the student's name, date, time, dosage given, and initials of person administering the medication.
6. The Teacher-in-Charge will be the usual one to give the medication.
7. All Medication will be kept in a locked drawer or cabinet that is easily accessible to the Teacher-in-Charge.

8. Medication checked into school may only be checked out by the parent or guardian that checked the medication in to the school/teacher. Any change in medication must have a physician's order.



# Parent/Student Bus Handbook

Dear Parents:

Cottonwood District #57's parent & student bus handbook is designed to provide families information about District regulations and procedures as those policies relate to school transportation approved for the 2022-23 school year. Parents must read this handbook and discuss its contents with their students riding the bus. Policies found in this handbook are based on state guidelines governing school transportation and student safety.

Hill County Transportation Committee possesses supervisory authority within the County over school bus transportation. As an aide to equalization of education provisions for students, the State Legislature has made provisions for school districts to receive state and county reimbursement for a portion of costs of its transportation program provided State Standards, Administrative Rules and Regulations are met.

## TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL:

### A. Board of Trustees

Chair -	Janas Strauser	(406) 394-3519	
	Carol Bachini-Wood	(406) 265-2354	
	Andee Peterson	(406) 394-4553	
District Clerk	Serena Dawson	(406) 265-6970	
Bus Driver	Sandy Young	(406) 394-2305	cell 262-3341

### B. General Duties and Responsibilities

#### 1. Board of Trustees

- a. Responsible for employing properly certified drivers
- b. Establish and enforce student discipline procedures
- c. Establishment of bus routes
- d. Compliance with State law and Administrative Rules.

#### 2. District Clerk

- a. Maintain current file for all bus driver personnel including, application, CDL, interview & hire, name, address, SS, and phone number.
- b. Responsible for collecting bus driver time cards
- c. Responsible for issuing pay checks
- d. Responsible for development and approval of bus routes
- e. Responsible for submitting approved routes to Hill County Transportation Committee.
- f. Receiving and resolving complaints

#### 3. Bus Drivers:

- a. Driving bus according to laws, rules and regulations.
- b. Enforcing district student behavior and discipline
- c. Insuring proper bus maintenance.
- d. Annual training requirements
- e. During an on-going public health emergency, after running each route, driver will clean the bus in accordance with CDC guidelines.

## **TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Student transportation to school via school bus is **not mandatory**. The local Board of Trustees has the option to provide this service. The service is provided by Cottonwood School District #57 for those who wish to avail themselves of this service under the terms approved by the Board of Trustees. It is expected that those who wish to use the service will read this manual and, in case there are questions, request an explanation in order to insure there are no misunderstandings.

### **ROUTE INFORMATION**

The initial planning and administration of school bus routes is the duty of the school district's board of trustees. Once approved, bus routes are subject to approval by the Hill County Transportation Committee.

All bus routes will be established with due consideration of conditions affecting safety; condition of roads, bridges and culverts; presence of railroad tracks and other hazardous crossings; extreme weather conditions; length of route; number of riders; availability of turn-around points; capacity of bus. It should be remembered that school transportation is **a group service and not an individual taxi service**.

Buses will not leave scheduled routes at any time unless changes have been approved by the Board of Trustees and Hill County Transportation Committee.

If an immediate change is necessary to accommodate an emergency, the county superintendent will be contacted for temporary approval as per statute.

Parents wishing a change in an existing route should refer request to school board trustees.

Route changes due to road conditions, pupil load, etc., are the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Once approved, final approval must come from Transportation Committee.

Timing of the route is important as the law provides that no school child attending an elementary school shall be required to ride the school bus, under average road conditions, more than one hour without consent of the child's parents. Time schedules for student pickup and drop off will be given to parents on the first day of school.

### **BUS STOPS**

Bus stops will be made only at designated loading and unloading places.

Bus stops will be selected where approaching motorists and/or the bus driver will have a clear view from either direction for a distance of 300-500 feet.

Parents and students are urged to know bus driver's name and telephone number.

All buses will be inspected semi-annually by State Highway Patrol officer and all drivers will be certified to meet regulations set by the State Department of Public Instruction and Montana statutes.

### **ACCIDENTS**

Bus driver is to report any accident to the proper authorities (county sheriff's office, city police or highway patrol and to the Board of Trustees.

If necessary, the Board or their designee shall notify parents by radio or phone in cases of emergency.

All accident reports will be completed and submitted to the Board for proper handling.

In cases where the driver is issued a citation for a traffic violation or accident while driving the school bus, the driver will be suspended from driving the bus until further investigation is done. The same procedure will apply

if a student is injured in a bus accident even though a citation is not issued. The Board will make the final determination whether the driver is allowed to continue driving for the district.

### **USE OF SCHOOL BUS**

Other than regularly assigned bus routes, authorization for the use of school buses will be handled through the Board. It is a general policy of the Board not to lend buses to groups other than for school-sponsored activities.

Under no circumstances will buses be used for personal business or entertainment.

### **ELIGIBILITY OF STUDENTS TO RIDE**

Cottonwood School District will provide bus transportation to and from school for public school students who reside three or more miles from school and live on routes approved by the Board of Trustees and the Hill County Transportation Committee.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Students will not be dropped off before the designated bus stop as a form of discipline.

The Board or the designated representative will be notified and discipline report completed whenever a student's behavior is such that it cannot be controlled or whenever there is consistent bus rule violation, bullying other riders or disrespect of school property.

### **BUS DRIVER DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

*Drivers must follow these procedures completely before action will be taken by the Board of Trustees.* When a situation arises that requires discipline, driver will assign the student a seat in the front of the bus for a definite length of time (3 days to 1 month).

- a. A discipline report must be completed by the driver and turned in to the Clerk by the following day.
- b. The bus driver will send the student discipline report to the parent. The parent must be alerted to the fact that if the problem persists, the student can be suspended from riding the bus.

If the driver must discipline a student for a second time within a three (3) month period, the student's name will be reported to the board.

Disciplinary report must be completed with **all** details concerning the incident included and turned into the Board.

The Board and the driver will then decide the consequences. Parents will be sent written notification.

Consequences will be suspension from riding the bus for a period of time.

If the driver must discipline a student for a third time within a three-month period or after the student has returned from suspension, student's name will be reported to the board.

A student may be expelled from riding the bus for a semester or a nine-week period.

When a situation arises such as swearing at the driver, deliberately defying the driver when a disciplinary action is taken or making obscene gestures at the driver, that require immediate suspension, the driver has the authority to immediately suspend the student from riding the next day.

Parents who disagree with consequences have the right to due process as related in the parent – student handbook. In this case, the driver must first be consulted orally then in written form. Due process as written in the handbook must be followed.

## SCHOOL BUS RULES

The following rules were developed to insure student safety and provide fast efficient transportation for students enrolled in Cottonwood School District #57. These rules are strictly enforced and it is therefore most important they be regularly discussed with students:

Students must be at the bus stop on time as the bus cannot wait for stragglers.

Students must wait out of the line of traffic until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver opens the door.

Students must not engage in horseplay as they might accidentally fall into the line of traffic.

Students must not run toward the bus in order to be the first in line to board.

Students must stay within the vision of the driver at all times.

### *While riding the bus:*

The driver is in charge of the bus and riders. Students must comply promptly with all driver's orders.

At driver's discretion, students may be assigned a seat and held responsible for remaining in that seat until driver makes a change.

Unnecessary conversation with the driver is prohibited.

Outside of ordinary conversation, students will observe classroom behavior while riding the bus.

Students **WILL NOT** throw waste paper or other debris on the bus floor.

Students who violate the above rule will serve detention and will clean the bus.

Arms or heads will **NOT** be extended out of bus windows at any time.

Students will not get on or off or move about the bus while it is in motion.

Students may not reserve seats.

Students may adjust windows only when instructed to do so by the driver.

Students will not board or depart the bus at a stop other than their own without **WRITTEN** permission from their parent.

Students will not eat food or drink beverages on the bus unless permitted by the driver.

Students will not exit from the emergency door unless a urgent situation exists.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Teachers must request using buses for field trips as per the staff handbook. However, these requests may not interfere with the regular bus routes.

Student behavior and dress codes is like that in the classroom. Females will be dressed appropriately in jeans, shirts or dresses depending upon the destination. Males may be dressed in jeans, shirts, or dress slacks. Depending upon the season, all students must have appropriate outer wear available.

Depending upon the length of the excursion, students may be permitted to bring snacks and drinks on the bus with Board permission.

Teachers are expected to also ride on the bus.

In cases of long or overnight trips, students may bring pillows or blankets. Again, the Board must give final permission.

Parents when serving as volunteers are invited to ride the bus.

**Please confirm by signing and returning the handbook signature page there is an understanding, acceptance and compliance of these policies.**

# SCHOOL HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE

AFTER READING THIS HANDBOOK, PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHER.

WE HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES PRESENTED IN THE SCHOOL'S HANDBOOK; WE UNDERSTAND EXPECTED BEHAVIORS AND RULES GOVERNING RIDING DISTRICT SCHOOL BUSES;

WE FURTHER AGREE TO ALLOW DISTRICT PERSONNEL TO PROVIDE FIRST AID TREATMENT, AND IF NECESSARY, CALL OUR PHYSICIAN, DENTIST OR AN AMBULANCE TO TRANSPORT OUR STUDENT TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL.

All student signatures on this page indicate they understand acceptable use of school technology and that each student agrees to abide by school policy regarding internet and computer use.

PRINT NAME: PARENT OR GUARDIAN

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

STUDENTS:

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_SIGNATURE\_\_\_\_\_

DATE\_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT ACCEPTABLE USE & SAFETY AGREEMENT 2022-23 CONSENT FORM**

As a parent or legal guardian of,

\_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Acceptable Use Policy and I understand that my son or daughter will be using a school computer and or network software provided by Cottonwood Schools as part of his or her education. I understand that my son or daughter will have access to Internet services provided and filtered by Cottonwood Schools. I also understand that teachers may from time to time post unidentified student work online to share with students and families. Teachers may also post unidentified student photographs online as part of their classroom activities and communication.

Student's Name (Please Print):

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

Student's School \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ **Please initial here if you do NOT want your students photograph to be posted online.**