

# **Columbia Elementary School**

## **Student/Parent Handbook**

*"Always Striving To Reach Our Stars!"*



**667 Balch Road**

**Madison, AL 35758**

**(256) 430-2751**

## Welcome

Welcome to Columbia Elementary School. This school year offers an educational opportunity for everyone to strive for his/her personal best. We believe students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community share in the responsibility of advancing the school's mission. Please take the time to read this handbook. If you have any questions, please refer to this handbook or call us at 256-430-2751. We look forward to an excellent school year at Columbia Elementary!

Mission: To empower students to reach their potential by creating a learning community that focuses on each student's unique talents and needs.

Motto: *"Always Striving To Reach Our Stars"*

Mascot: Astros

Colors: Red, Black, and White

Pillars of Character: Kindness, Gratitude, Motivation, Respect, Cooperation, Resilience, Responsibility

## Parents Help Students Succeed

Student success depends greatly on parental involvement and support. Parents with a positive attitude toward education help their children succeed in school. Students will adjust quickly and happily if they are prepared to enter school with an attitude of anticipation and pleasure.

Some ways you can help your child succeed this year are:

- Take an active interest and be involved in school activities.
- Have your child to school on time.
- Establish and monitor a homework routine.
- Read to your child daily and have your child read to you.
- Notify the school of any and all changes in transportation, address, and phone numbers.

## Meet Your Administrative Team



Principal - Mrs. Miranda Bolden joined the CES administrative team in January of 2022. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at Athens State University. After teaching 5th grade ELA at Columbia Elementary for seven years, she pursued a Masters of Science in Educational Leadership at Samford University. She then spent three years as an assistant principal at Rainbow Elementary. Mrs. Bolden considers leadership in education to be a true call to servanthood, and she is honored to be a part of such a dynamic, forward-thinking school. During her free time, Mrs Bolden enjoys spending time with her husband, Jason, and four children: Benjamin, Elijah, Madalyn, and Grace. Mrs. Bolden loves coffee, Alabama football, Braves baseball, and the beach!  
Email: [mabolden@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:mabolden@madisoncity.k12.al.us)



Assistant Principal - Ms. Kimberly Massey joined the CES administrative team in September of 2019. She earned her Bachelor of Science from Alabama A&M University. After teaching 2nd grade and Kindergarten at Jones Valley Elementary for 5 years, she then became an instructional partner at Dawson Elementary for 1 year. While teaching she pursued her Masters of Science in Educational Leadership at Alabama A&M University. She then transitioned to Madison City Schools where she became the MAAP at CES for 2.5 years. Ms. Massey has had a desire to reach more students than just the ones in her classroom since her 1st year teaching and knew being in school leadership would allow her to be involved in the success of each student. During her free time, she enjoys going to the gym, watching her favorite shows on Hulu and Netflix, and spending time with her friends. Ms. Massey loves Reese cups, shopping, and trying new restaurants!  
Email: [kmassey@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:kmassey@madisoncity.k12.al.us)



MAAP - Mrs. Kara Lawrence is joining the CES administrative team this year. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from The University of Alabama in Huntsville. She began her teaching career at Harvest Elementary teaching 3rd grade, and after two years in Madison County, she had the opportunity to teach 3rd grade at Heritage Elementary in Madison City. While teaching grades 3 and 5 at Heritage Elementary, she pursued her Masters in Instructional Leadership from the University of West Alabama. In addition, she obtained her National Board Certified Teacher certification and was named District Elementary Teacher of the Year 2023-2024. Mrs. Lawrence is thrilled to be a part of the Astro family and cannot wait to serve students in this new role. In her free time she enjoys spending time with her husband, Ben, and two children: Harrison and Sadie. Mrs. Lawrence loves eating out at restaurants, traveling, and an ice cold coke!  
Email: [kalawrence@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:kalawrence@madisoncity.k12.al.us)

## **Arrival and Dismissal Times**

Students are allowed to enter the building at 7:10 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 7:40 a.m. Dismissal is at 2:40 p.m.

## **Attendance**

If a student's learning and growth are to take place, parents, students, and educators must acknowledge their responsibilities to assure attendance. Alabama state law requires that students are in school during all days and hours that school is in session. Parents will be notified of student absences by telephone and by letters prepared and sent from the student management program according to the following schedule:

- a. A telephone call, text, or email to the first contact as recorded in PowerSchool will be made after each absence.
- b. A warning letter will be sent via email to the first contact as recorded in PowerSchool after a student has accumulated THREE unexcused absences.
- c. A mandatory meeting will be scheduled with the school administration after a student has accumulated FIVE unexcused absences.
- c. After the seventh unexcused absence, a petition will be filed by the system's attendance officers with the District Attorney's office.

**An unexcused tardy is defined as a missed instructional opportunity and has become a great concern within the Madison City Schools, especially at the elementary level.** Due to this growing concern, the Attendance Officer will visit each elementary school annually to discuss tardies, absences, and consequences with the faculty. All schools, including secondary schools, will adhere to the following procedure concerning tardies:

- a. If a student has 5 unexcused tardies, parents will receive a warning letter from the school.
- b. If a student is tardy 10 times, the parents will attend a conference with the principal or principal's designee.
- c. If a student is tardy 15 times, the parents must attend a meeting at the Central Office with the Attendance Officer.

*\*Email all excuses and/or doctor's notes to [cesattendance@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:cesattendance@madisoncity.k12.al.us) **within three days of the absence**.* Failure to do this will result in the absence being unexcused. Please refer to the Attendance section in the Student Code of Conduct and Parental

Reference for any other questions you may have about the attendance policies.

### **Breakfast and Lunch Information**

Breakfast is served Monday through Friday from 7:10-7:38 a.m. A hot lunch is also served daily. Free or reduced-price lunches are available for those who qualify. The lunchroom computer allows children to prepay for meals. The payments may be made for a week, month or an entire year. Each time the child purchases a lunch in the cafeteria, the cost of the meal is automatically deducted from the child's account. If there is money in your child's account at the end of the school year, it may be carried over to the next school year or refunded upon written request. Prepayments should be given to the lunchroom cashier in the cafeteria or to your child's homeroom teacher. Please write your driver's license number, child's name and cafeteria number on the check.

Students are expected to use good manners and quiet voices in the cafeteria. We also expect the students to clean up their eating area before leaving the cafeteria and to exit in an orderly manner.

Parents are welcome to join their children for lunch. Please sign in at the office to get a visitor's badge prior to entering the building, and be prepared to present identification.

### **Response to Intervention Team (RTI)**

RTI is a designated school-based committee designed to meet the needs of general education students at-risk of failure due to academics or behavior. RTI plans are for regular education classes only. RTI is not for students with an active IEP or 504 Plan. For information on this program please contact your child's teacher or the assistant principal.

### **Bus Services**

Madison City Schools provide bus transportation for all students. Students are expected to show respect to other students and to the bus drivers at all times.

### **School Bus Safety**

For thousands of students in Madison City, the school day begins and ends with a trip on the school bus. The greatest risk is not riding the bus, but approaching or leaving the bus. According to the Alabama State Department of Education, along with the National Safety Council, school

buses are the safest form of ground transportation. In fact they are about 40 times safer than the family car.

Teaching children how to be a safe pedestrian is essential to school bus safety. Beginning with their first step as they leave the house, children must learn how to safely arrive at the school bus stop, board the bus, behave during the bus ride and exit the bus.

### Tips for a Safe Bus Ride

- Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
- When the bus approaches, stand at least 10 feet away from the curb, and line up away from the street.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens and the driver says that it's okay before stepping onto the bus.
- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road to a point at least 10 feet ahead of the bus and watch for the bus driver to signal that it is safe before crossing the street.
- Be sure the driver can see you and you can see the bus driver.
- Use the handrails to avoid falls.
- When exiting the bus be careful that clothing with drawstrings and book bags with straps don't get caught in the handrails or doors.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver may not be able to see you.

### Car Line Procedures

The car line procedures at Columbia Elementary School are essential to creating a safe and efficient environment for morning and afternoon arrival and dismissal. Our goal is to receive and dismiss the students in a timely manner while keeping everyone involved safe.

### **Morning Car line Drop off: 7:10 – 7:37 AM**

Car line begins on Balch Road and enters from the south entrance of the school. This is the only car line which is approved for the arrival of car riders. Please do not pull to the front of the school for drop-off as this is a safety concern for our walkers. Once in the car line, drive around the side of the school.

The student drop off area begins at the start of the sidewalk near the out building and playground. It is imperative that ***each car drive as far toward the end of the awning*** in order to maintain a smooth line of vehicles. Your student should have their bookbags on so they can exit the vehicle when it comes to a complete stop. Please ensure that your child is positioned as close to the sidewalk as possible when departing and arriving into your vehicle. Students must exit the car from the passenger side of your vehicle.

PASSING A CAR IN FRONT OF YOU IS PROHIBITED. This type of behavior can result in collisions and can escalate into a very dangerous situation.

Students should not be dropped off in the front parking lot for any reason. If you must bring your student in through the front parking lot, please park and escort them into the building. **Car line opens at 7:10 AM.** The closer to this time you drop off your student, the faster your journey through the car line will be. **Car line closes at 7:37 AM.**

### **Afternoon Car Line Pick-up: 2:40-3:00 PM**

It is of utmost importance that you follow the direction of the faculty and staff outside guiding the car line. Faculty and staff on duty inside the building will supervise car line students in the gym until their names are called and they line up outside of the back door to be instructed as to which number they will go to and wait for their parent or guardian. The student names will be called based on the order in which their parents'/guardians' cars are aligned. If a car line gets out of order, this causes delays and the potential for students to become confused and upset.

In addition, parents must have their car line tag with them when they pick up their children. If you do not have a tag with you, you will need to go to the front office, so proper identification can be verified. We apologize for this inconvenience, but we must ensure students are released to their parents or to individuals listed in our records.

The afternoon car line opens at 2:40 (the starting point in the afternoon is behind the detailed sign as you near the first playground area). However, this does not mean that you may drive to the sidewalk to pick up your child precisely at this time. Please be patient and wait until buses completely make their way beyond the awning and a signal from the administrator to proceed.

The afternoon car line will officially close at 3:00 p.m. If you arrive after the line has closed, please make your way to the front office in order to pick up your child. Picking up your child in the front office when all of the other

students have left typically leads to anxiety, fear, and frustration. There are emergency situations that do occur, and we completely understand. However, if all possible, please pick your child up in a timely manner between 2:40 and 3:00 p.m.

If you are late to the car line more than 3 times, your child will be sent to Extended Day at 3pm every day you are late moving forward. You will be required to pick up your child from them and pay a drop-in fee. A meeting with administration will be scheduled with parents/guardians of any student who is habitually picked up late from the car line.

We appreciate your adherence to these procedures. This will ensure students arrive and dismiss in a timely manner while remaining safe.

### **Clinic**

We have a nursing service available on campus. We treat minor injuries, and attempt to determine the source of the children's aches and pains. Parents are notified when a child has a fever, or if a student has experienced a head injury. It is vital to always have a current home, work and emergency number for your child. Please refer to the Madison City Schools Student Code of Conduct for guidelines of how medication is to be administered to students during school hours.

### **Club and Extra Curricular Activities**

Each year there are a variety of after school activities offered. These opportunities will be announced in newsletters, emails and on the school website.

### **Counseling Services**

Our counseling services are varied and comprehensive, depending on the needs of individual students, classes, and grade levels. They include one on one and/or group counseling for children with specific behavioral and emotional concerns, developmental counseling instruction in the classroom, and crisis intervention. The counselors also provide rich resources for our teachers.

### **Discipline**

It is the goal of Columbia Elementary to initiate a school-wide effort to teach our students effective and positive problem solving skills and appropriate social behaviors. Our expectations are for students to be respectful,



responsible, cooperative and kind. This school-wide plan sets forth consistent, systematic guidelines that provide for a safe, educational environment. In addition, individual classroom discipline plans will be sent home with each student from classroom teachers. The school will uphold the MCS Code of Conduct.

### **Dress Code**

Students shall not wear clothes or decorate or adorn themselves in school such that they display immodesty, unduly attract attention to the human form, or tend to cause disruption. All students must comply with the most recent MCS Dress Code guidelines.

### **Emergency Dismissal**

In the event of emergency weather related events, it may be necessary for school to have a delayed start or early dismissal.

Parents will receive correspondence from the district and local school. Check local media outlets for early dismissal or late start times. When school is dismissed early, after school activities, including Extended Day services, will be canceled.

### **Gifted**

Madison City Schools houses a program for gifted students in every elementary school. Students in grades 3-5 are served in the program. Any teacher or parent who has knowledge about a child, including the student himself, can make a referral for gifted services by contacting verbally, or in writing, either the classroom teacher, or the Gifted Specialist at the local school. For more information, parents may contact the Gifted Specialists at Columbia.

### **Items from Home**

Toys and playground equipment are not to be brought to school without permission from your child's teacher. Items brought from home may be taken and held until the parents can make arrangements to pick them up. These items may include, but are not limited to, trading cards, electronic games, baseball bats, all types of playground balls, walkie-talkies, radios, pagers, and other items that may be deemed unsafe or disruptive by supervising adults. Toys resembling weapons are not allowed.

## Communication Devices

Visible possession and/or use of cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, and any other one- or two- way electronic device in the classroom during the instructional day is prohibited unless instructed by the teacher. Teachers and administrators may, at any time, require students to put away any/all electronic devices, including electronic wearables.

## Leaving School Early/Transportation Changes

For the welfare and protection of your child, your cooperation in the following procedures will be appreciated:

1. It is important to let your child know how he/she is to get home before he/she comes to school. Please email all transportation changes to your child's teacher AND to [cestransportation@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:cestransportation@madisoncity.k12.al.us) . Students will be sent home as usual if a change is not received by the homeroom teacher and the office by 1:45PM. **Phone calls to the front office about transportation changes should only be made in cases of emergency.**

2. Any adult checking a student out during school hours must come into the school office. The person requesting the child is required to show a picture ID. This will be verified by PowerSchool to confirm the person is authorized to check out the student. If the person requesting the child is not on the student's contact list in PowerSchool, then a call to the parent/guardian is required. All check outs must be completed by 2:15pm daily. Emailing your child's teacher that you will be checking your child out can help ensure things move more efficiently.

## Library Media Center

The Library Media Center has one important goal: to instill a love of reading into every child. Students may check out books/materials and keep them for 14 days. One renewal can be made when the book/material is presented.

Overdue, Lost or Damaged Books

Students are responsible for overdue, lost, or damaged books/materials. They will not be able to check out books/materials until the replacement/damage cost is paid. CES does not issue refunds.

### **Nutritional Information for Snacks and Celebrations**

On July 12, 2015, the Alabama State Board of Education passed sweeping changes directed at improving the health and well-being of the students in our schools in an effort to stem the incidence of childhood obesity and obesity-related health problems. These changes have impacted all areas of school where food is sold or served during the school day. Many areas were addressed by the board. These areas include not only the Child Nutrition Program (CNP), but also the school environment itself. These policies include:

- Restriction on the sale of carbonated drinks and high fructose sugar/drinks - no carbonated drink or drinks that are high in fructose or sugar can be sold or given free of charge to students at the elementary level.
- Foods or drinks of minimal nutritional value may not be sold or provided free of charge as identified by the USDA. These are listed below:

- o Chewing gum

- o Certain candies processed predominantly from sugars, corn syrups, or artificial sweeteners including but not limited to hard candies, sour balls, fruit balls, candy sticks, mints, sugar wafers, rock candy, cinnamon candy, breath mints, cough drops, jelly candies, marshmallow candies, fondants, candy corn, licorice, cotton candy, candy coated popcorn.

Birthday Celebrations:

Please limit birthday treats to pre-packed goodie bags. You may also purchase ice cream from the cafeteria for the class. We cannot accommodate the sharing of cookies, cupcakes, etc due to a variety of allergies.

## **Parent Teacher Association**

PTA membership and support is vital to the success of Columbia Elementary School. Classroom volunteers, room parents, story readers, field trip chaperones, and many other opportunities await you should you wish to help Columbia Elementary. Please visit our website and contact PTA volunteers or call the office and leave a message for the PTA volunteer coordinator if you would like to volunteer your time or talents.

## **Parent Teacher Conferences**

Columbia teachers schedule conferences with families to discuss their child's progress. Conferences with the teacher develop a mutual understanding of the child and help make his/her time in school a happy, productive experience. It is very important that families attend these conferences. Each teacher will contact families as conferences are needed. Parents may also request a conference at any time.

## **Phone Calls**

Parents will be notified of any emergency or serious illness involving their child. Parents will also be called to discuss behavior issues that may result in disciplinary action. The school phone is for business purposes. Students will be allowed to use the phone in emergencies only.

## **Progress Reports and Report Cards**

Progress reports indicate your child's progress in academic areas and social and emotional development. These progress reports are given out every three weeks after the first six weeks of school. Report cards are distributed in the months of October, January, March and May. Please note, PowerSchools is the most efficient way to monitor grades daily.

## **Staff Email**

Parents may contact their child's teacher by email. However, email is not to be used to discuss confidential information. Consequently, the teacher may request that parents arrange for a meeting, rather than engage in a lengthy email exchange. Please allow teachers 24 hours (during the school week) to respond to your emails. Many teachers do not have access to their school email on weekends. Note: If teachers are absent, substitutes cannot access the teachers' email.

## **Visitors**

Parents are always welcome at our school. Parents, volunteers, and visitors must use the front office entrance, and sign in using a current valid driver's license. You will be issued a visitor's badge to wear while in the building. Columbia considers parent volunteers a very special resource. Parents are encouraged to help in classrooms, programs, and extracurricular activities. Please note, in order to chaperone, or volunteer in some positions, an annual background check is required. Please see our school website to locate the proper site for this background check. We appreciate our parents' understanding of this protocol, as we are committed to keeping all students safe.

## **Walkers**

Walkers are dismissed through the front and back entrances. Please do not wait in the parking lot to pick up your student, as this poses a safety hazard to your student and to the safety of others. Walkers also need to remember to stay on the sidewalk at all times when exiting from the back entrance. For walkers in the West Highland subdivision, please be sure to walk along the sidewalk at least three feet from the curb before proceeding from the playground area. Crown Pointe walkers, please be sure to always go around the back entrance parking lot along the sidewalk. Students are never to cross the parking lot at any point in time, and must remain on the sidewalk until reaching the soccer fields to proceed into the Crown Pointe community.

## **Alabama Literacy Act**

By 3rd grade, students must be proficient in foundational reading skills in order to comprehend texts. If unsuccessful, they will have difficulty understanding grade level reading material. Students also need strong reading skills in order to learn other school subjects such as science, social studies, writing, and even math.

Each kindergarten through 3rd grade student will have his/her reading assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. These assessments will identify students who need intensive reading instruction and intervention. These assessments also provide useful information for the teacher to help tailor instruction to meet individual

student needs. Families should receive these results in writing within a designated time frame.

The State Board approved assessment is the reading portion of the 3rd grade Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) English Language ArtsLIT assessment. The ACAP summative is a required test for all third-grade students to initiate a path to promotion. Students not demonstrating sufficient reading skills may be retained at the end of 3rd grade if they are unable to show sufficient reading skills by one of the other paths to promotion.