

Columbia
Elementary
Student/Parent
Handbook



2015-2016

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 for 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.

Parents Help Students to Succeed

Student success depends greatly on parental attitude. 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.
- Monitor homework assignments.
- Establish a regular homework routine.
- Read to your child daily and have your child read to you.
- Notify the school of any and all changes of transportation or address and phone numbers.

Arrival and Dismissal

Students are not allowed to enter the building until 7:05 a.m. Classes begin 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 to each home telephone number as recorded in INOW will be made after each absence.
- b. A letter will be sent home to each home address after a student has accumulated three-five unexcused absences.

c. After the seventh unexcused absence, a petition will be filed by the systems 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, the 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 Central Office with the Attendance Officer.

Bring a parental or doctor's note to the office 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 7:05-7:38 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 prepayments may be made for a week, month or an entire year. Each time the child buys 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. However, please sign in at the office and get a visitor's badge prior to entering the cafeteria.

Pupil Services Team (PST)

PST is a designated school-based committee designed to meet the needs of general education students at-risk of failure due to academics, behavior, or potential drop-out. PST plans are for

regular education classes only. PST is not for students with an active IEP or 504 Plan. For information on this please contact our counselor, Cindy Perry.

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 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 draw strings 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 dismiss the students in a timely manner while keeping everyone involved safe.

It is of upmost 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 lined 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, it is important parents 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.

Car line begins on Balch Road and enters from the south driveway of the school. This is the only car line which is approved for the arrival of car riders. Once in 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. **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.

Please ensure that your child is positioned as close to the sidewalk when departing and arriving into your vehicle. If you as a parent, an administrator, or a teacher has to physically walk behind your car and open the driver side back door, this will slow the car line down tremendously.

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 7:05. The closer to this time you drop off your student, the faster your journey through the car line will be. Car line closes at 7:35.

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 and realize the line is 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.

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

Clinic

We have a minimal 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's temperature is high or 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, sent home and available on our Columbia website under clubs and organizations.

Counseling Services

Our guidance services are varied and comprehensive depending on the needs of the individual students. They include one-to-one or group counseling for children with specific behavioral and emotional concerns, developmental guidance instruction in the classroom and crisis intervention. The counselors also provide a rich resource 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. This school-wide plan sets forth consistent, systematic guidelines that provide for a safe, educational environment. It fosters respect for self, respect for others, respect for learning and respect for property. In addition, individual classroom discipline plans will be sent home with each student.

Dress Code

Dress Requirements for All Grades:

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 following guidelines:

1. Students must be neatly dressed, clean, well groomed, and practice good personal hygiene.
2. Shoes or sandals must be worn and properly laced or fastened. Foot apparel determined to be dangerous or a safety hazard may not be worn.
3. Hair must be clean and sanitary and worn so that it does not impair vision and is not considered unsafe or hazardous and styled and colored in such a manner that would not cause a distraction/ disruption
4. Clothing must not include pictures, writings, symbols, etc., promoting, acknowledging, or suggesting drugs, tobacco products, alcohol, sexual activities or anything of a sexual nature, gangs, groups, individuals, or activities that would be considered potentially dangerous,

disruptive, or hazardous to the student, to other students, or to the school environment. Tattoos with pictures, writings, symbols etc. prohibited by this paragraph must be kept covered by the student's clothing, and not otherwise displayed in the overall school environment during any activity.

5. Students in a classroom or participating in other indoor activity will remove outer garments normally intended for outdoor wear. Garments to be removed include overcoats, trench coats, bulky and/or oversized jackets or oversized pullovers. Garments that equate to a lightweight windbreaker or sweater are permissible. Parents and students should assure that student attire provides for adequate comfort indoors without the wearing of outdoor garments.

6. Prohibited items of clothing include, but are not limited to: off the shoulder tops, tank tops, halters, sheer or see through clothing, clothing with holes or other exposure above the knees. Over the -shoulder straps must have a minimum width of one and one-half inches. Generally, the hem or cuff of skirts or shorts should not be higher than four inches above the knee of the wearer, depending on the size and height of the child, and appropriate proportionately, as determined in the discretion of the Principal.

7. Apparel that does not reveal the body in an inappropriate manner must be worn, e.g., clothing must not be too tight, too short, or bare at the midriff or sides. Clothing, trousers, or shorts which are excessively baggy and/or which are worn so as to expose underwear or body above or below the waist, and/or which drag on the floor will not be permitted. Oversized shirts are not permitted unless tucked in.

8. Hats, caps, and other head coverings shall not be worn in school.

9. Sunglasses and bandanas shall not to be worn in school or on school buses.

Emergency Dismissal

In the event of emergency weather related events, it may be necessary for school to dismiss early.

Check local media outlets for early dismissal or late start times. When school is dismissed early, after school activities, including Extended Day service will be canceled. Elementary School buses will begin their routes AFTER Middle School and High School buses complete their routes.

Enrichment

Madison City Schools houses a program for gifted students in every elementary and middle school. Any teacher or parent who has knowledge about a child, including the student himself, can refer an individual student for the Talent Pool by contacting verbally, or in writing, either the classroom teacher, or the Enrichment Specialist at the local school. For more information, parents may contact the Enrichment Specialist at Columbia, or contact the Coordinator of Instruction for Madison City Schools at (256) 464-8370.

Items from Home

Toys and playground equipment are not to be brought to school without permission from your child's classroom 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 yo-yo's, trading cards, electronic games, baseball bats, all types of playground balls, walkie-talkies, tape-recorders, radios, cell phones, pagers, and other items that may be deemed unsafe or disruptive by supervising adults. Toys resembling weapons are not allowed.

Leaving School Early

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 send any changes of transportation to your child's homeroom teacher when there is a change in the mode of transportation. Students will be sent home as usual if a note is not received by the homeroom teacher and/or the office by 2:15.
2. Children leaving school during the day for any reason need to bring a signed note from the parent/guardian permitting the school to excuse the child.
3. Any adult picking up the child must come into the school office first. The person requesting the child is to sign in and show a picture ID. This will be verified by the computer to see if the person is allowed to check out the student. If the person requesting the child is not allowed to check out the student, then a call to the parent/guardian is required.

Media Center

Students must turn in a signed copy of the "Columbia Media Center Permission Form" before checking out a book. All books checked out to the students are due back within seven days. One renewal can be made only when the book is presented. Books may be returned before their due date. All students are allowed one book at a time. Each student will be issued a patron barcode for checkout. This information will be issued on a library card. Each student must have the card in order to check out a book. Lost cards will be replaced for \$1.00. We encourage students to check out a book on their AR level upon your request.

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 Water ices, slushies, popsicles (excepts those containing fruit juices)
 - 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.

Parent Portal

Parent Portal Instructions

Instructions: To access iNow for parents:

- First go to the web portal at <http://gateway.madisoncity.k12.al.us>.
- Locate “**Registration**” *under* the login fields. You will create an account but only do this one time each year. (The “System Check” link will help you if you run into computer errors.)
- Select “**Click here to register for an account**”. This is where you are setting up your web portal account, *not* your iNow account. However, it is advisable to use the same **username** provided, if you do not have one contact CES office at 256-430-2751, and use the password **mcs2012-13, you will choose** when you reset your iNow password upon login. This way, they’ll be the same. The password must have at least 8 characters and include letters and numbers. Fill in the fields to finish creating your **web portal account**. Note that two portal accounts cannot use the same email address. A large green check mark and redirection to the logon screen indicates successful account creation.
- You may log into the web portal immediately using your newly created username and password. On the **iNow login screen**, enter the username and password **on your PIN slip, if you do not have a PIN slip contact CES office at 256-430-2751, to be provided one**, and you will be prompted to change your password. It is advisable to set it as the same one you created for your portal login. It must have at least 8 characters and include letters and numbers.

Please call the help desk at 256-774-4611 or

email mcshelpdesk@madisoncity.k12.al.us if you need assistance.

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.

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.

Renaissance Learning (Accelerated Reader)

Research shows that time spent reading both in and out of school is directly related to student achievement in reading. This includes improving fluency, increasing vocabulary, and building background knowledge. There is also evidence that unless children read substantial amounts of print, their reading will remain laborious and limited in its effectiveness. By providing students with books that are appropriate in level as well as the time to practice reading, we believe that the students at Columbia will improve in academic areas. Our teachers are committed to making reading a part of students' everyday lives through our literacy promotion, our constant support and encouragement for students in all stages of reading development, our own enthusiasm for literature and learning, and our constant pursuit for 100% literacy for all students. Our use of the AR program is one component in this pursuit for grades 1-6. This

program is a tool for teachers and students that help promote a greater volume of reading in our school. We continue to work to make the program successful.

Staff Email

Parents may also 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

You are always welcome at our school. Parents, volunteers, and visitors must use the front office entrance and sign in on the Lobby Guard using a current valid drivers license. You will be issued a visitor's pass to wear while in the building. Columbia considers parent volunteers a very special resource. Parents are encouraged to help in classrooms, programs, and extra-curricular activities.

Walkers

Walkers are dismissed through either the front or back entrance. 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.

Columbia Staff Members

Principal: Mr. Jamie Hill

Assistant Principal: Ms. Laura Minor

Counselor: Ms. Cindy Perry

Clerk: Ms. Linda McMillen

Bookkeeper: Ms. Cecilia Carpenter

School Hours

Instructional Start Time 7:40

Students must be in the classrooms no later than 7:40

School Dismissal Time 2:40

Columbia Elementary School

667 Balch Road

Madison, AL 35758

(256) 430-2751