

# Student/Parent Handbook 2017-2018



## Mill Creek Elementary School

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Carmen Buchanan, Principal  
Karl Fernandez, Assistant Principal  
Nathan Wilson, M.A.P.

## Meet Your Principal



Carmen Buchanan has two children, Taylor, who is a graduate of James Clemens High School and Braylon who is in the fourth grade at Mill Creek Elementary. She is a native of Madison County. Ms. Buchanan began her teaching career in 1993 at Liberty Middle School. During her time at Liberty, she taught: language arts, social studies, art, and drama. She transitioned to the role of Instructional Partner at Liberty in 2010. Her administrative career also began at Liberty where she became an assistant principal in 2012. During the 2012-2013 school year, she served as assistant principal at James Clemens High School. Ms. Buchanan worked as the Coordinator of Instructional Technology for Madison City Schools in the fall of 2014 prior to being selected as principal of Mill Creek in December of 2014.

Ms. Buchanan is a proud co-founder of EdCampMadisonAL and EdCampLeaderAL. She has been published in the book *A+Teaching: 180 Ways to Enhance Your Success as a Teacher*, in the May 2014 edition of *Educational Leadership*, and on the Alabama Best Practices website.

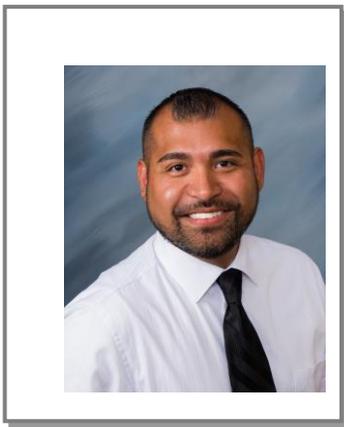
Ms. Buchanan's hobbies include reading, quilting, physical fitness, and spending time with her sons. On weekends she enjoys running half marathons and relay races. She has a cat that her son Braylon affectionately named Dab.

Follow her on Twitter: @MsB\_MCES

Her MCES blog: <https://tackk.com/@CarmenTBuchanan/tackks>

Her educational blog: <https://carmenbuchanan.wordpress.com/>

## Meet Your Assistant Principal



Karl Fernandez, originally from the Pacific Island of Guam, took up residence here in the Huntsville area back in 1999 as his father was in the U.S. Army. His passion for education was realized at a very young age and was pursued through his undergraduate attendance to Calhoun Community College and Athens State University, followed by his graduate attendance at the University of West Alabama, Samford University, and now the University of Alabama, where he is currently working on his doctorate degree in Instructional Leadership.

Mr. Fernandez began his career in education in 2008 as a science teacher at Sparkman High, teaching Marine Science, Project Lead the Way's Human Body Systems, Forensic Science, Honors Anatomy & Physiology, and AP Biology. He joined the Mill Creek family in 2016, where he is excited to serve as Assistant Principal.

He has two dogs: a great dane named Reina, and a miniature schnauzer named Phin. He enjoys traveling and, more recently, kayaking!

# Meet Your Madison Aspiring Administrator Position



Nathan Wilson has been married to his wife, Randi, for nine years. They have one child, Cooper, who is four years old. He is a native of Vernon, Alabama. Mr. Wilson began his teaching career in 2008 in the Madison County School District. During his time in Madison County, he taught: second grade, third grade, fifth grade, and high school ELA. He coached softball and basketball. In 2016, Mr. Wilson accepted a job to teach sixth grade ELA at Mill Creek Elementary and in 2017, Mr. Wilson accepted the MAAP position at Mill Creek Elementary.

Mr. Wilson pursued his undergraduate degree by attending and graduating from Beville State Community College and The University of North Alabama. In December of 2016, Mr. Wilson graduated with his masters degree in Instructional Leadership from The University of North Alabama. Mr. Wilson enjoys spending time with his family, attending sporting events, and going to the beach!

## **Mill Creek Elementary School is a one-of-a-kind learning experience!**

Mill Creek offers a variety of opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and take ownership of their school environment before entering middle school. Mill Creek offers over 20 extracurricular activities ranging from drama and art club to student broadcasting and archery teams. Mill Creek students can be found serving on budget committees, making decisions about what playground equipment should be ordered, writing scripts for the morning announcements, and serving on advisory teams.

Mill Creek is a very unique school with a diverse population of students represented from over 21 countries. Mill Creek is privileged to have a talented and exceptionally bright group of students boasting some of the highest test scores in the state and winning extensive awards in math, robotics, and art. In 2012, Mill Creek was recognized by the state as a Leed Green Ribbon School. Mill Creek was chosen as a Project Based Learning site in 2015 by the Alabama State Department of Education. Mill Creek has an “Outdoor Learning Laboratory” in the far corner of the campus that is used to implement STEM activities. As a result of our strong science curriculum, Mill Creek was named a CLAS banner school in the spring of 2016. As administrators at Mill Creek Elementary School, we consider it a privilege to be the lead learners of the school. We love visiting classrooms daily to sit with our students and share in their learning. We find it equally rewarding to partner with the phenomenal teachers and staff members employed at Mill Creek.

Our vision for Mill Creek Elementary is to provide a place where students and teachers are empowered. Student ownership is a key component to learning. We want to provide a student-centered environment where students are engaged in a variety of instructional opportunities that connect what they are learning to the real world. We feel that students must be able to compete globally and learning must go beyond the four walls of Mill Creek. We feel that our parents and our community are partners in this venture. Together, we can all make a difference in the lives of our students at Mill Creek.

We have six houses that are based on the Six Pillars of Character Education that we use at our school. Every student, faculty member, and staff member are a part of a house. Each student is assigned a House Mom or a House Dad.

### **Why do we want to implement a House System?**

- To promote a small school feel in our large school (We are the third largest school in our district.)
- To promote positive relationships between all grades (Houses will consist of adults and students from all grades.)
- To promote a sense of belonging for all students that goes beyond the classroom walls
- To promote positive connections between students and teachers (Students will get to know other adults besides their teacher. Teachers will be assigned students within their houses to be their House Mom or House Dad. This allows students to get to know other adults in the building. Once again, we are a large school. We need to know each other.)
- To promote character education

### **How did we name the houses?**

We named them based on the Six Pillars of Character Education.

**House Fidelis**

Character Pillar: Trustworthiness

House Color: Blue

**House Secundum**

Character Pillar: Respect

House Color: Yellow

**House Officium**

Character Pillar: Responsibility

House Color: Green

**House Aequum**

Character Pillar: Fairness

House Color: Orange

**House Sollicitus**

Character Pillar: Caring

House Color: Red

**House Civitate**

Character Pillar: Citizenship

House Color: Purple

**Clubs and Organizations**

Newspaper Club	Student Advisory Council
Character Council	Green Power Racing Team
Archery Team	Safety Patrol
Chess Club	Drama Club
Writing Club	Girls on the Run
Lego Robotics	Math Teams (3 <sup>rd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )
Running Club	Peer Helpers
Junior Leaders Team	FCA
Young Writers Club	Elementary Student to Student



**Parents Help Students to Succeed**

Positive parental support is encouraged and is an integral part of the success of your child.

The following will help your child succeed daily:

- Take an active interest in school activities.
- Arrive promptly for school.
- Monitor planners and assignments.
- Establish regular routines.
- Support and engage in reading activities.
- Please update any contact information upon change.

**Mill Creek Staff Members**

Principal: Carmen Buchanan

MAAP: Nathan Wilson

Secretary/Bookkeeper: Ro Deberry

Assistant Principal: Karl Fernandez

Counselor: Ashley Claborn

Nurse: Faith Aderholt

Reading Coach: Tosha Swearingen  
ISS Instructor: Heather Bryant

Receptionist: Allyson Willis  
Permanent Substitute: Jessica Hernandez

### **School Hours**

Students are allowed to enter the building at 7:10 A.M. Instructional time begins promptly at 7:40 A.M. and ends at 2:40 P.M. Check-out prior to 11:10 A.M. will be marked as an absence.

### **Transportation Information**

#### ***Bus Procedures***

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. Repeated or at risk misbehaviors may result in the loss of the privilege to ride the bus.

#### ***Car Rider Procedures***

Vehicles will enter the campus at the entrance located on the east side of the school off Mill Road. The carline loops around and forms two drop off lines beginning at the cone at the back parking lot. Cars will exit onto Mill Road. **Car line will open at 7:10 A.M. and close at 7:35 A.M.**

1. Please help us by dropping off your child through the carline as early as possible.
2. Parents are not allowed to park in the back lot and walk their child/children to the door. Everyone **MUST** go through the car line.
3. Please drive your car down to the last person standing on the sidewalk (the more cars we can unload at one time the faster it will move).
4. Teachers and Staff will signal for students to exit the car. This signal will come after all cars dropping off have stopped. When all students are safely on the sidewalk, cars will again be signaled to proceed to Mill Road.
5. It is imperative that cars remain in carline and **never** pass another car while in the carline area.
6. Due to safety concerns, **NO** students are to be dropped off in the front of the building in the morning between 7:10 and 7:35. If you have a conference or meeting, you are welcome to park in the first section on the east side of the building and enter the front door and sign in.
7. Finally, in order that carline move more efficiently, we are asking students to be ready to exit their car as soon as you stop and to open the doors themselves (especially 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> graders). It will also be helpful if book bags and lunch boxes are in hand, kisses have been given, and pets are in another seat.
8. If you arrive on campus after 7:35, you will be asked to park in the front parking lot and sign your student(s) in through the front office.
9. **The car line ends at 3:00 P.M. Students not picked up by 3:00 will be sent to our Extended Day program and will be charged the daily rate.**

#### ***Bicycle Procedures***

Cyclists are to walk their bikes on school grounds and lock bikes at the rack provided on the east side of the building. They will enter through the car rider entrance only. The crosswalk must be used as access to and from the school. Helmets are required on school grounds. Skateboards and rollerblades are not permitted on campus. Please provide written notification to the office if your child uses a bicycle for transportation anytime during the school year.

#### ***Walker Procedures***

All walkers must be escorted to and from the school campus by an adult. Students are expected to stay on the sidewalk, respect the property of neighbors, cross at crosswalk and follow the directions of the crossing guard. Please provide written notification to the office if your child will be a walker anytime during the school year.

#### ***Leaving School Early Procedures***

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

- It is important to let your child know his/her arrival and/or dismissal procedures from school each day.
- An adult who requests a child for check-out must show a picture ID. Verification will be made by school office personnel.
- In order to checkout a student, the person must be listed as an emergency contact.

### **Transportation Changes**

If you wish to change your child's normal transportation, the following methods will be accepted:

- Written communication to homeroom teacher.
- **In cases of EMERGENCY**, the front office will accept a phone call.
- Please make all transportation changes before **2:00 P.M.** of that day. You will need to e-mail your child's teacher AND Allyson Willis at [abwillis@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:abwillis@madisoncity.k12.al.us)

## Attendance

### *Absences*

Alabama state law requires that students are present during school hours. Parents will be notified of student absences by an automated telephone system and by written notification according to the following guidelines:

- An automated telephone call will be made after each absence.
- A letter will be sent home after a student has accumulated five **unexcused** absences.
- After the seventh **unexcused** absence, a petition will be filed by the system's attendance officer to the District Attorney's office.

**A written note must be provided within three days of the absence** to be accepted and coded excused. Please refer to the attendance section in the Student Code of Conduct and Parental Reference for any other concerns you may have about the attendance policies.

### *Tardies*

Mill Creek will monitor tardies and schedule conferences as needed. It is very important that your child be present at the beginning of the school day.

### **Information given over the phone**

Student information will not be given by our office staff over the phone. This includes inquiries about attendance. If you wish to inquire about your child, you will need to come to the front office and provide proper identification before student information will be given.

### **Delivering items to students**

Forgotten items will not be delivered to students. When a classroom is called to deliver an item, instruction stops for the entire class. Make sure that your child has all the items needed for the day prior to leaving home. Deliveries for food and gifts to students will not be accepted nor delivered.

### **Animals on school campus**

Due to allergies and asthma, animals are not allowed in the school building.

### **Breakfast and Lunch Information**

Parents are welcome to come and eat lunch with their child. All visitors must sign in through the front office. Breakfast is served Monday through Friday from 7:15-7:35 A.M. A hot lunch is also served daily. Menus are available via the school website. Free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch is available for those who qualify. Each student is issued a lunch account and prepayments can be made for a week, month or an entire year. We encourage you to use the prepay plan either by sending a check to your child's teacher or by using the online payment method (PAMS) (see system website). Please write your driver's license number, child's name and cafeteria number on the check. **Breakfast is \$1.75 for students. Lunch costs \$2.60 for students and \$4.50 for visitors.** Each time the child eats from 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 will be carried over to the next or refunded upon written request.

### **Nutritional Guidelines for Food and Beverage:**

On July 12, 2005, 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 and served. Parents must adhere to the following guidelines if providing food items for snack or celebration. These guidelines are for PreK-6<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

The changes include:

- Carbonated drinks and high fructose sugar/drinks-no carbonated drink or drinks that are high in fructose or sugar may NOT be sold or given free of charge to students at the elementary level.
- Food or drink with minimal nutritional value may NOT be sold or provided free of charge as identified by the USDA. These are listed below:
  - Ices, slushes, popsicles (except those containing fruit juices)
  - Chewing gum
  - Cupcakes/Cake
  - 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, and candy coated popcorn.

### **Food/Snacks for Students**

Mill Creek Elementary School adheres to the nutritional guidelines set forth by the Alabama State Department of Education. As a result of these guidelines, the following procedures have been developed to provide you with helpful information regarding the distribution of food items during the school day and/or classroom parties.

### ***Distribution of food to students during a normal school day:***

1. Parents may send/bring food items to the school that are **only for their own children and no one else.**

2. Food items such as cupcakes, birthday cakes, cookies, candy, and etc. sent /brought to school **will not be distributed to other students by parents or teachers.**

#### **Classroom Parties:**

1. Parents may send/bring food items to the classroom party (one per semester) based on the menu provided by the teacher, but these items must be store bought and follow the nutritional guidelines set forth by the Alabama Department of Education.
2. **No exception - homemade food items will not be allowed during classroom parties.**
3. The food provided during the party should **remain sealed** until its arrival in the classroom.
4. **Please check with the classroom teacher before purchasing food items for classroom parties due to the possibility of a student(s) in the class having a food allergy.**

The faculty and staff appreciate your assistance in this matter. As always, our top priority is the students and providing them with a productive school environment. A list of snack items you may send/bring to classroom parties:

#### **Healthy Snack List for Classroom Parties**

- Low-Fat Yogurt
- Pretzels
- Graham Crackers
- Whole Grain, Low-Fat Crackers
- Cheese Crackers
- Low-Fat String Cheese
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Low-Fat Veggie Dip
- Low-Fat Microwave Popcorn
- Applesauce
- Oatmeal-Raisin Cookies
- Granola Bars
- Baked Chips
- Mini-Muffins
- Half of Sandwich (Must be prepared in the classroom before the party)
- Water
- Low-Fat Milk
- 100% Fruit Juice
- Cheese Pizza (Thin Crust)

#### **RtI2 Team**

RtI2 is a school-based committee designed to meet the needs of general education students at-risk of failure due to academics, behavior or potentially at-risk of drop-out. RtI2 plans are for regular education students only. RtI2 is not for students with an active IEP or 504 Plan. For more information please contact our school counselor, Ashley Claborn.

#### **Cell Phones and Electronic Devices**

- Cell phones and other electronic devices may be brought to school and used for instructional purposes.
- The school will **not** be liable for cell phones/electronic devices if lost or stolen.

#### **Clinic**

Mill Creek has minimal nursing services available on campus. The nurse is able to treat minor injuries, monitor symptoms and administer approved medication. The parent(s) are notified when a child's temperature is 100 degrees (or above) or when deemed necessary by our school nurse. For this reason, it is vital to always have a current home, work and emergency number on file for your child. Please refer to the Madison City School's Student Code of Conduct for information on system medical policies and procedures.

#### **Clubs and Extra-Curricular Activities**

Each year there are a variety of extra-curricular activities offered at our school. These opportunities will be announced as they occur. Students must be picked up on time. We expect all students to represent Mill Creek in a positive manner at all after school events.

#### **Counseling**

Guidance services are available to meet the needs of students. Our counselor meets with every class once a month to provide lessons on study skills, bullying prevention, making healthy choices, understanding feelings, etc. Individual or small group counseling sessions are available for children with specific concerns.

#### **Student Attire**

Please send your child to school in appropriate clothing that follows the guidelines of the Madison City Student Code of Conduct. Students must wear a belt with loose-fitting pants, jeans or shorts. Please make certain students have appropriate footwear for PE, which will be defined by the PE staff at the beginning of each year. **Print names on all clothing your child might take off at school such as sweaters, coats, caps, and gloves.** Lost items will be housed in the lost and found. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of each month.

**Student Conduct**

It is the goal of Mill Creek Elementary to initiate a school-wide effort to encourage our students to demonstrate effective and positive problem solving skills as well as appropriate social behaviors. This school-wide plan offers consistent systematic guidelines that provide for a safe educational environment. Our school-wide expectations are as follows: be respectful; be responsible; be cooperative; be caring. Mill Creek fosters respect for self, others, property, and learning environment. Grade level plans will be sent home with each student.

**Emergency Dismissal**

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for school to dismiss early. School closing information will be communicated via School Messenger, Twitter, Madison City School website, local media outlets and teacher email distribution lists. When the school is dismissed early, after school activities, including **extended day services will be canceled**.

**Extended Day**

Extended day services are available to all students. If you are interested, please contact the school office or check our website for details.

**Enrichment Services**

Mill Creek provides enrichment services for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. For more information, parents may contact the enrichment specialist at the school.

**Homework and Missed Assignments**

Homework is part of the total learning experience. Please encourage your child to complete his/her daily homework assignments. Reading may be assigned as a part of the homework. If your child is sick and needs the homework or missed daily assignments after the second day’s absence, please call the office early in the morning in order for the teacher to prepare the missed school work.

**INOW**

Madison City Schools offer a resource called “INOW”. You can access this resource through your internet browser to view your child’s grades, attendance, homework assignments, etc., as posted directly from the teacher’s on-line grade book and lesson planner.

**Items from Home**

**Toys and playground equipment are not to be brought to school without permission from the child’s classroom teacher.** Items brought from home may be taken and held until the parents can make arrangements to retrieve. These items may include, but are not limited to, yo-yo’s, trading cards, electronic games, baseball bats, all types of playground balls, electronic devices or other items that may be deemed unsafe or disruptive by supervising adults. Toys resembling weapons are not allowed.

**School Messenger**

School Messenger is an email service that is used by Mill Creek Elementary to communicate important information to parents. Messages from the Principal, PTA, and Superintendent of Madison City Schools are often sent via School Messenger. School Messenger pulls from the contact information in School Mint. If you need to update any information during the school year, please do so in writing to Allyson Willis at [abwillis@madisoncity.k12.al.us](mailto:abwillis@madisoncity.k12.al.us)

**Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

PTA membership and support is vital to the success of Mill Creek Elementary School.

The Mill Creek Parent Teacher Association is here to help create the best learning environment for our entire Mill Creek Family. The overall purpose of the PTA is to "Make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children".

The PTA Board is made up of volunteers who work hard to have a lot of fun with all of the Mill Creek community.

President	Toni Apse	President@mcespta.org
Secretary	Angie Sacco	Secretary@mcespta.org
Treasurer	JaNay Nichols	treasurer@mcespta.org
VP of Membership	Shannon Mullins	membershipvp@mcespta.org
VP of Ways & Means	Gina Ridenour	waysandmeansvp@mcespta.org
VP of Volunteers	Rachel Celani	volunteersvp@mcespta.org
VP of Programs	Nicole Radowski	programsvp@mcespta.org

The board believes that there are many great ideas and talents hiding in all of you. There are many areas where your time and talents can be utilized to help make Mill Creek Elementary a great place for our community. Please feel free to contact any member of the board if you are interested in getting involved or have questions.

Student Safety is of great importance to all of us at Mill Creek. All volunteers are required to have a background check before working in the classrooms. Please go to the following website to get started: <https://bib.com/secure/Volunteer/Madison-City-Schools/>

Check out our website for more details. [WWW.MCESPTA.ORG](http://WWW.MCESPTA.ORG).

You can also find us on Facebook at Mill Creek Elementary School PTA , Twitter @MillCreek\_PTA and Remind at [www.remind.com](http://www.remind.com). Remind allows you to sign up for text and email communications directly from PTA.

### **Parent/Teacher Communication**

#### ***Conferences***

Mill Creek teachers offer conferences bi-yearly for every child to discuss his/her progress. Parents are welcome to contact the teacher for an additional conference if needed.

#### ***Email***

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher by email. However, email is not a recommended form of communication regarding confidential information. If teachers are absent, substitutes cannot access a teachers' email. In the event of an emergency, please contact the school office via telephone as email is not a reliable form of communication.

#### ***Phone Calls***

The school phone is for school related communications. Students will be allowed to use the phone in an emergency only. Parents will be notified by school personnel of any emergency situation involving their child, as well as, behavioral issues that may result in a disciplinary action.

### **Parents or Visitors to the Campus**

Parents and visitors are always welcome. However, all guests should report to the office, sign in with a driver's license or proper identification, and receive a visitor's badge. Instruction is valued and protected; therefore, the policy of Mill Creek is to limit ALL classroom interruptions. Due to privacy reasons, parent observation of classes is not allowed. Please refrain from parking along the curbs as these are fire lanes and should be open for emergency vehicles. Additional parking can be found on the east side of the building.

### **Media Center**

Students must sign and return a Library Student Use form at the beginning of each school year stating that he/she will treat books with respect as well as attend an orientation discussing library procedures with our media specialist, Kris Gray.

### **Textbooks/Library Books**

All classroom textbooks are loaned to the students for their use during the school year. Textbooks are to be kept clean and should be handled appropriately. Parents are required to pay for any lost or damaged textbooks and library books.

### **Progress Reports and Report Cards**

Progress reports indicate your child's progress in academic areas. Progress reports are provided every three weeks beginning the sixth week of school. Reference the Madison City website for progress reports and report cards dates.

### **Renaissance Place (AR)**

Research shows that time spent reading both in and out of school is directly related to student literacy achievement. 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. It is our belief that the students at Mill Creek will improve in all academic areas by providing students with books that are appropriate in level as well as providing the time to **practice** reading.

### **Supply List**

Grade-level specific supply lists are available on the Mill Creek School website.

It is the official policy of the City of Madison Board of Education that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, disability, sex, religion, national origin or age be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity or employment.