Bigfork Elementary School
Student Handbook

2026-2027

Mission Statement

The mission for School District 38 is to help all students acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be individually successful throughout life. In partnership with students, parents, and community, we are committed to having high expectations for all students by maintaining a safe, nurturing environment that promotes success, learning as a lifelong process, responsibility, and respect for one another.

Bigfork Elementary School

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Mrs. Jill Morley, 3rd Grade Teacher
Ms. Jane Sundell, 3rd Grade Teacher
Mr. Erik Gustavson, 4th Grade Teacher
Mrs. Tabatha Venezio, 4th Grade Teacher
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Mrs. Jessica McGinnis, PE Teacher
Mrs. Tanya McAnally, Computer Teacher
Mrs. Angie Hansen, Speech Therapist
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Mrs. Tara Clark, Paraprofessional
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Bigfork Elementary School Student Handbook

This Handbook has been prepared to help acquaint the student with the rules and guidelines which are necessary for our school to operate and function smoothly. It is the family's responsibility to become familiar with the contents and follow the directions given.

The Bigfork Elementary School student handbook contains information that students and parents are likely to need during the school year. The handbook is organized alphabetically by topic.

Throughout the handbook, the term "the student's parent" is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

The student handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board policy. Please be aware that this document is updated annually, while policy adoption and revision is an ongoing process. Therefore, any changes in policy that affect student handbook provisions will be made available to students and parents through newsletters and other communications. These changes will generally supersede provisions found in this handbook that have been made obsolete by newly adopted policy. Please note that references to policy codes are included to help parents confirm current policy.

In case of conflict between Board Policy or any provisions of student handbooks, the provisions in the student handbooks are to be followed.

The Bigfork School District's policies can be found on the district website at: www.bigforkschools.org

I. Policies & Legal Requirements

Annual Notices

Federal and state annual notices are located on the school's main webpage and are updated each year.

Equal Education, Nondiscrimination

The District will make equal educational opportunities available for all students without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, ethnicity, language barrier, religious belief, physical or mental handicap or disability, economic or social condition, actual or potential marital or parental status. No student will be denied equal access to programs, activities, services, or benefits or be limited in the exercise of any right, privilege, or advantage, or denied equal access to educational and extracurricular programs and activities.

Disclosure Information

Release of "Directory Information"

Regarding student records, federal law requires that "directory information" on my child be released by the District to anyone who requests it unless I object in writing to the release of this information. This objection must be filed within ten school days of the time this handbook was given to my child. Directory information ordinarily includes the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, and participation in officially recognized activities and sports. This information needs to be consistent with Policy 3600P, 3600F1, and 3600F2. In exercising my right to limit release of this information, I have completed the Student Directory Information Notification and returned it to the school.

Rights concerning a Student's School Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents/guardians and students over eighteen (18) years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and copy the student's education records, within a reasonable time from the day the District receives a request for access.
2. The right to request amendment of the student's education records which the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, irrelevant, or improper.

3. The right to permit disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA or state law authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to a copy of any school student record proposed to be destroyed or deleted.
5. The right to prohibit the release of directory information concerning the parent's/guardian's child.
6. The right to request that information not be released to military recruiters and/or institutions of higher education.
7. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605

Social Media and Website Picture Release

Throughout the school year, there may be times when Bigfork School students will be photographed or video recorded by school personnel. These pictures/videos may appear on Bigfork School District's website and/or the School District's social media pages. At the start of each school year, an online opt-out form is sent to parents/guardians of Bigfork School students in grades K-8 via a Bright Arrow email. By submitting this form, parents/guardians can opt their child/children out of being featured on the Bigfork School District accounts. At any point throughout the school year, a parent/guardian can opt their child out of being featured on school social media by contacting the Bigfork Elementary School office.

Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her education — to benefit from teacher-led activities, to build each day's learning on that of the previous day, and to grow as an individual.

State law requires: A student between the ages of 7 and 16 **must** attend school unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused. A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her sixteenth birthday is required to attend each school day.

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent from school without permission, from any class or from required special programs, will be considered truant and subject to disciplinary action. Truancy may also result in assessment of a penalty by a court of law against the student and his or her parents. See Policy 3122, and 3123.

Bigfork School District believes every student should attend school every day. The process of education requires instruction that is based on skill-building, class participation, learning experiences, and study. We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. However, we also know that when a child misses school or a lesson for any reason, it interferes with their learning environment and that of others. This can, in turn, cause students to fall behind.

Research (*Attendance Works)* shows:

1. Children chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade.
2. By sixth grade, chronic absence is an early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is considered chronically absent if he or she misses just two days of school per month. When a student is absent from any class for more than five days, the principal or designee will send a letter to the parents/guardians per Bigfork School Board policy.

Cafeteria Services

The District participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced lunches daily. Free and reduced-price lunches are available based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. See www.bigforkschools.org to apply.

Lunch prices are as follows:
K-6: breakfast = $1.75 reduced breakfast = $.30 lunch =$2.75 reduced lunch =$.40
7-12: breakfast =$2.00 reduced breakfast =$.30 lunch =$3.25 reduced lunch =$.40

Communicable Diseases / Conditions

To protect children from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the school nurse or principal so that other students who **may** have been exposed to the disease can be alerted.

These diseases include, but are not limited to: Amebiasis, Campylobacteriosis, Chickenpox, Colorado Tick Fever, Diphtheria, Gastroenteritis, Giardiasis, Hansen's Disease, Hepatitis, Influenza, Lyme disease, Malaria, Measles (Rubeola), Meningitis, Mumps, Pinkeye, Ringworm of the Scalp, Rubella (German Measles), including congenital Salmonellosis, Scabies, Shigellosis, Streptococcal disease, invasive, Tuberculosis.

The District shall manage common communicable diseases in accordance with DPHHS guidelines and communicable diseases control rules. If a student develops symptoms of any reportable communicable or infectious illness as defined while at school, the responsible school officials shall do the following:

a) isolate the student immediately from other students or staff; and
b) inform the parent or guardian as soon as possible about the illness and request him or her to pick up the student; and
c) consult with a physician, other qualified medical professional, or the local county health authority to determine if the case should be reported to the local health officer.

Students who express feelings of illness at school may be referred to a school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board and may be sent home as soon as a parent or person designated on a student's emergency medical authorization form has been notified. The District may temporarily exclude from onsite school attendance a student who exhibits symptoms of a communicable disease that is readily transmitted in a school setting. Offsite instruction will be provided during the period of absence in accordance with Policy 2050. The District reserves the right to require a statement from a student's primary care provider authorizing a student's return to onsite instruction.
When information is received by a staff member or a volunteer that a student is afflicted with a serious communicable disease, the staff member or volunteer shall promptly notify a school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board to determine appropriate measures to be taken to protect student and staff health and safety. A school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board, after consultation with and on advice of public health officials, shall determine which additional staff members, if any, need to know of the affected student's condition.

All students, staff, and others present in the any school building shall engage in hand hygiene at the following times, which include but are not limited to:

a) Arrival to the facility and after breaks
b) Before and after preparing, eating, or handling food or drinks
c) Before and after administering medication or screening temperature
d) After coming in contact with bodily fluid
e) After recess
f) After handling garbage
g) After assisting students with handwashing
h) After use of the restroom

Hand hygiene includes but is not limited to washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available. Staff members shall supervise children when they use hand sanitizer and soap to prevent ingestion. Staff members shall place grade level appropriate posters describing handwashing steps near sinks. Further information may be found at policy 3417 in the District's Policy Manual

Complaints by Students / Parents

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed simply — by a phone call or a conference with the teacher. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the District has adopted a uniform complaint procedure policy at 1700 in the District's policy manual. In general, a parent or student should first discuss the complaint with the individual involved. If unresolved, a written complaint and a request for a conference should be sent to the Principal. If still unresolved, the matter may be referred to the Superintendent. Under some circumstances, the District provides for the complaint to be presented to the Board of Trustees in the event the matter cannot be resolved at the administrative level.

Some complaints require different procedures. Any building office or the Superintendent's office can provide information regarding specific processes for filing complaints. Additional information can also be found in the designated Board policy, 1700, available on the website.

Computer Resources

To prepare students for an increasingly computerized society, the District has made a substantial investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate from this handbook) regarding use of these resources; violations of this agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action. Students and parents should be aware that electronic communications — e-mail — using District computers are not private and may be monitored by District staff. [For additional information, see policy 3612, 3612P]

II. Student Conduct & Discipline Procedures

Conduct

In order for students to take advantage of available learning opportunities and to be productive members of our campus community, each student is expected to:

- Demonstrate courtesy — even when others do not.
- Behave in a responsible manner, always exercising self-discipline.
- Attend all classes, regularly and on time.
- Prepare for each class; take appropriate materials and assignments to class.
- Meet District or building standards of grooming and dress.
- Obey all building and classroom rules.
- Respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, and other District staff.
- Respect the property of others, including District property and facilities.
- Cooperate with or assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline.

The Board grants authority to a teacher or Principal to hold a student to strict accountability for disorderly conduct in a school building, on property owned or leased by a school district, on a school bus, on the way to or from school, or during intermission or recess.

Disciplinary action may be taken against any student guilty of gross disobedience or misconduct, including but not limited to instances set forth below:

- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling tobacco products, and alternative nicotine and vapor products as defined in 16-11-302, MCA.
- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling alcoholic beverages, including powdered alcohol. Students who may be under the influence of alcohol will not be permitted to attend school functions and will be treated as though they had alcohol in their possession.
- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling drug paraphernalia, illegal drugs, marijuana, controlled substances, or any substance which is represented to be or looks like a narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, stimulant, depressant, or intoxicant of any kind, including such substances that contain chemicals which produce the same effect of illegal substances including but not limited to Spice and K2. Students who may be under the influence of such substances will not be permitted to attend school functions and will be treated as though they had drugs in their possession.
- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring a firearm or other weapon in violation of Policy 3311.
- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring any object that reasonably could be considered or used as a weapon as referred to in Policy 3311.

- Disobeying directives from staff members or school officials or disobeying rules and regulations governing student conduct.
- Using violence, force, noise, coercion, threats, intimidation, fear, or other comparable conduct toward anyone or urging other students to engage in such conduct.
- Causing or attempting to cause damage to, or stealing or attempting to steal, school property or another person's property.
- Engaging in any activity that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function or any other disruptive activity.
- Unexcused absenteeism. Truancy statutes and Board policy will be utilized for chronic and habitual truants.
- Intimidation, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, hazing or bullying; or retaliation against any person who alleged misconduct under Policy 3225 or 3226 or participated in an investigation into alleged misconduct under Policy 3225 or 3226.
- Defaces or damages any school building, school grounds, furniture, equipment, or book belonging to the district.
- Forging any signature or making any false entry or attempting to authorize any document used or intended to be used in connection with the operation of a school.
- Engaging in academic misconduct which may include but is not limited to: cheating, unauthorized sharing of exam responses or graded assignment work; plagiarism, accessing websites or electronic resources without authorization to complete assigned coursework, and any other act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student.

These grounds stated above for disciplinary action apply whenever a student's conduct is reasonably related to school or school activities, including but not limited to the circumstances set forth below:

- On school grounds before, during, or after school hours or at any other time when school is being used by a school group.
- Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school.
- Travel to and from school or a school activity, function, or event.
- Anywhere conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of bullying of a staff member or student, or an interference with school purposes or an educational function.

Disciplinary Measures

Disciplinary measures include but are not limited to:

- Expulsion
- Suspension
- Detention, including Saturday school
- Clean-up duty
- Loss of student privileges

- Loss of bus privileges
- Notification to juvenile authorities and/or police
- Restitution for damages to school property

Non-Disciplinary Measures

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to assign a student to non-disciplinary offsite instruction pending the results of an investigation or for reasons related to the safety or well-being of students and staff. During the period of non-disciplinary offsite instruction, the student will be permitted to complete all assigned schoolwork for full credit. The assignment of non-disciplinary offsite instruction does not preclude the Superintendent or designee from disciplining a student who has, after investigation, been found to have violated a School District policy, rule, or handbook provision.

Delegation of Authority

The Board grants authority to any teacher and to any other school personnel to impose on students under their charge any disciplinary measure, other than suspension or expulsion, corporal punishment, or in-school suspension, that is appropriate and in accordance with policies and rules on student discipline. The Board authorizes teachers to remove students from classrooms for disruptive behavior.

Corporal Punishment

No person who is employed or engaged by the District may inflict or cause corporal punishment on a student. Corporal punishment does not include, and district personnel are permitted to use, reasonable force as needed to maintain safety for other students, school personnel, or other persons, or for the purpose of self-defense.

III. General Information

Counseling

Personal Counseling
The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, or emotional issues. The counselor may also make available information about community resources to address these concerns. Students who wish to meet with the counselor should contact Andrea Rossman at 406-837-7412.
Please note: The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent, unless required by state or federal law for special education purposes.

Distribution of Material

The distribution of materials from outside the school system uses a considerable amount of valuable educational time. This time is taken away from students, teachers, and the clerical staff. It is the District's policy to limit the distribution of materials to parent and student organizations sponsored by the District or other governmental agencies. Materials which provide information valued or needed by the District may also be distributed. All organizations must have the approval of the Superintendent before materials may be distributed. The Superintendent will use the guidelines listed above in the approval of the distribution of the materials. In addition materials must advertise a youth oriented activity, not promote religion or political positions or be disruptive, libelous, or obscene.

In order to facilitate the distribution of materials with information about student activities offered in the community, each school may do the following:

a) Maintain a centrally located bulletin board for the posting of bulletins.
b) Maintain a table where flyers and other information can be made available to students.
c) Include announcements for student-related activities in materials that go home to students.

It is the intent to post all notices and place flyers on the distribution table except those that are viewed by the principal as likely to be disruptive, libelous, or obscene.

Dress and Grooming

The District's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards (refer to Policy 3224).

The Board recognizes that each student's mode of dress and grooming is a manifestation of personal style and individual preference. The Board or its agents will not interfere with the right of students and their parents to make decisions regarding student dress and appearance

except in cases that disrupt the educational environment of the schools, or pose a health and safety threat to others. The Board authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee to develop and enforce procedures for the monitoring of student dress and grooming in school or while engaging in extracurricular activities.

Procedures shall be specifically outlined in each school's student handbook and, at a minimum, shall prohibit student dress or grooming practices that:

- Present a hazard to the health or safety of the student, other students, staff, or visitors to the school.
- Create a disruption of the educational environment of the school.
- Represent gang membership or reference to gang related activities.
- Express obscene language or symbols, or symbols of sex, drugs, or alcohol.
- Express any message deemed inappropriate for a school environment.

Building administrators shall use reasonable judgment in determining the appropriateness of student dress and grooming and shall take disciplinary action according to board policy and the student handbook.

Electronic Devices

Cell Phones

Cell Phones, smart watches and other smart devices are not to be on, out, or used during the school day as per policy 3630. Inappropriate use may result in confiscation of equipment. The principal/staff member will confiscate equipment used during the school day. Parents may be asked to pick up any confiscated systems.

1) Phones and other smart devices are prohibited during the school day by the school board.
    a) Breaking a rule will result in
        i) Loss of device for the day (student may pick up)
        ii) Loss of device for the day (parent or guardian will be asked to pick up device)
        iii) Loss of device for the day and lunch detention (parent or guardian will be asked to pick up device)
        iv) Loss of device for the day and 1 day of in school suspension (parent or guardian will be asked to pick up device)
        v) Continued defiance may result in board action.
    b) Not giving a phone to an adult when asked will result in an in-school detention for insubordination.
        i) The principal will hear all appeals on a phone being taken, but only if the student hands the phone over without argument or complaint.
        ii) Students will have access to school-issued technology.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

When students under the age of 13 use school-approved online services for educational purposes, the school may provide consent on behalf of parents/guardians as permitted by law. These services are used solely to support instruction, learning activities, and school operations.

Bigfork School sends out information to parents/guardians of students in grades K-8 about Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) at the start of each school year. Parents/guardians who do not want their child/children to have access to school-issued electronic devices and school-approved online services are asked to submit the opt-out form attached to the email. At any point throughout the school year, a parent/guardian can opt their child/children out of giving consent to COPPA by contacting the Bigfork Elementary School office.

Fees

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds and are at no charge to a student. A student, however, is expected to provide his or her own pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks and may be required to pay certain other fees or deposits, including:

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extra-curricular activities
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased student accident insurance.
- Participation fees for extracurricular activities.
- Musical instrument rental.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Summer school courses that are offered tuition free during the regular school year.

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the school secretary.

A school district may withhold the grades, diploma, or transcripts of a current or former pupil who is responsible for the cost of school materials, unpaid lunch fees, or the loss or damage of school property until the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian satisfies the obligation. (Refer to Policy 3520)

Firearms and Weapons

It is the policy of Bigfork School District to comply with the federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and state law 20-5-202 (2), MCA, pertaining to students who bring a firearm to, or possess a firearm at, any setting that is under the control and supervision of the school district. In

accordance with 20-5-202 (3), MCA, a teacher, superintendent, or a principal shall suspend immediately for good cause a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to, or possess a firearm at, any setting that is under the control and supervision of the school district. In accordance with Montana law, a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to, or possess a firearm at, any setting that is under the control and supervision of the school district must be expelled from school for a period of not less than 1 year unless modified in accordance with District policy. Any disciplinary hearing conducted under this section will honor due process rights outlined in state law and Policy 3311.

For the purposes of the firearms, the term “firearm” means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 921 (4).

Possession of Weapons other than Firearms

The District does not allow weapons on school property. Any student found to have possessed, used or transferred a weapon on school property will be subject to discipline in accordance with the District’s discipline policy. For purposes of this section, “weapon” means any object, device, or instrument designed as a weapon or through its use is capable of threatening or producing bodily harm or which may be used to inflict self-injury, including but not limited to air guns; pellet guns; BB guns; fake (facsimile) weapons; all knives; blades; clubs; metal knuckles; numchucks (also known as nunchucks); throwing stars; explosives; fireworks; mace or other propellants; stun guns; ammunition; poisons; chains; arrows; and objects that have been modified to serve as a weapon. Refer to Policy 3311.

Homework

Homework is a constructive tool in the teaching/learning process when geared to the needs and abilities of students. Teachers may give homework to students to aid in the student’s educational development. Homework should be an application or adaptation of a classroom experience and should not be assigned for disciplinary purposes.

Medicine at School

A school employee who has successfully completed specific training in administration of medication, pursuant to written authorization of a physician or dentist and that of a parent, an individual who has executed a caretaker relative educational authorization affidavit, or guardian, may administer medication to any student in the school or may delegate this task pursuant to Montana law.

A student who has authorization to possess and self-administer medication must have completed and filed, with the office, either a Montana Authorization to Carry and Self-Administer

Medication or a Montana Authorization to Possess or Self-Administer Asthma, Severe Allergy, or Anaphylaxis Medication form. Details regarding self-administration of medication are available at the office as outlined in Policy 3416, 3416F, 3416F1.

Immunization

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical or religious reasons, the student will not be immunized. The immunizations required are: diphtheria, pertussis, rubeola (measles), rubella, mumps, poliomyelitis and tetanus. Haemophilus influenza type B is required for students under age five (5).

A student who transfers into the District may photocopy immunization records in the possession of the school of origin. The District will accept the photocopy as evidence of the immunization. Within thirty (30) days after a transferring student ceases attendance at the school of origin, the District must receive the original immunization records for the student who transfers into the District.

If a student's religious beliefs conflict with the requirement that the student be immunized, the student must present a statement signed by the student (or by the parent, if the student is a minor) stating that immunization conflicts with the beliefs and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the student is an adherent or member. This statement must be renewed yearly.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a Montana licensed or certified health care provider stating the immunization required would not be considered safe. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a life-long condition. The statement for an exemption shall be maintained as part of the student's immunization record in accordance with FERPA as specified in Policy 3600P. [For further information, see policy 3413]

Law Enforcement

Questioning of Students

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a student at school:

- The Principal will verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question or interview the student.
- The Principal ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify parents unless the interviewer raises what the Principal considers to be a valid objection.
- The Principal ordinarily will be present unless the interviewer raises what the Principal considers to be a valid objection.

- The Principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview, if the questioning or interview is part of a child abuse investigation.

Students Taken into Custody

State law requires the District to permit a student to be taken into legal custody:

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court.
- To comply with a properly issued directive to take a student into custody.
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services, Montana Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Montana Code relating to the student's physical health or safety.

Before a student is released to a law enforcement officer or other legally authorized person, the Principal will verify the officer's identity and, to the best of his or her ability, will verify the official's authority to take custody of the student.

The Principal will immediately notify the Superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a custody action, notification will most likely be after the fact. [refer to Policies 4410-4411]

Parent Involvement, Responsibilities, and Rights

The District believes that the best educational result for each student occurs when all three partners are doing their best: the District staff, the student's parents, and the student. Such a partnership requires trust and much communication between home and school. To strengthen this partnership, every parent is urged to:
Encourage his or her child to put a high priority on education and commit to making the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
Review the information in the student handbook with his or her child and sign and return the acknowledgment form(s) and the directory information notice**.** A parent with questions is encouraged to contact the building Principal.

Become familiar with all of the child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the District. Discuss with the counselor or Principal any questions, such as concerns about placement, assignment, and the options available to the child. Monitor the child's academic progress and contact teachers as needed.

Attend scheduled conferences and request additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or Principal, please call the school office at 406-837-7412.

A teacher will usually arrange to return the call or meet with the parent during his or her conference period or at a mutually convenient time before or after school.

Participate in campus parent organizations, such as PTA. Parents have the opportunity to support and be involved in various school activities, either as leaders or in supporting roles.

Prayer

Each student has a right to individually, voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. The school will not require, encourage, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

Protection of Students Rights (Policies 3200, and 2132)

The District recognizes fully that all students are entitled to enjoy the rights protected under federal and state constitutions and law for persons of their age and maturity in a school setting. The District expects students to exercise these rights reasonably and to avoid violating the rights of others. The District may impose disciplinary measures whenever students violate the rights of others or violate District policies or rules.

Surveys

Parents have the right to inspect any survey or evaluation and refuse to allow their child to participate in such survey or evaluation.

Instructional Materials

Parents have the right to inspect instructional materials used as a part of their child's educational curriculum, within a reasonable time. This does not include academic tests or assessments.

Collection of Personal Information from Students for Marketing

The district will not administer or distribute to students any survey or other instrument for the purposes of collecting or compiling personal information for marketing or selling such information, with the exception of the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing educational products/services for, or to, students or educational institutions.

Pursuant to federal law, the district will not request, nor disclose, the identity of a student who completes any survey or evaluation (created by any person or entity, including the district) containing one or more of the following:

- Political affiliations.
- Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or family.
- Sexual behavior and attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior.
- Criticism of other individuals with whom the student or the student's family has a close family relationship.
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of students or the student's parent/guardian.
- Income, except when the information will be used to determine the student's eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

Release of Students From School

A student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day except with permission from the principal or designee and according to the building sign-out procedures. Unless the Principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the instructional day.

A student who will need to leave school during the day must bring a note from his or her parent that morning. A student who becomes ill during the school day should, with the teacher's permission, report to the office or school nurse. The administrator or nurse will decide whether or not the student should be sent home and will notify the student's parents.

Report Cards, Progress Reports, and Conferences

Written reports of absences and student grades or performance in each class or subject are issued to parents at least once every trimester.

Safety

Accident Prevention

Student safety on campus and at school-related events is a high priority of the District. Although the District has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensure school safety. A student should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the principal, teachers, or bus drivers.

- Remain alert to and promptly report safety hazards, such as intruders on campus.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other District employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

If injured while at school or at a school sponsored activity, contact your teacher, advisor, or coach and have them fill out the district's injury report form as soon as possible. This form can be obtained at the nurse's office.

Students MUST tell the coach/sponsor of the injury so that the coach/sponsor can file an accident report. Notification to the coach/sponsor PRIOR to seeking a physician's care is very important. The insurance carrier for Bigfork Schools will not process any paperwork without first having an accident report on file.

Accident Insurance

The school district does not provide accident or medical insurance coverage for students. Insurance coverage may be purchased by parents through a private company for a minimum fee.

Emergency Medical Treatment and Information

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school will need to have written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment and information about allergies to medications, etc. Therefore, parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up to date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the office to update any information.

Disaster Drills and Other Emergencies

From time to time, students, teachers, and other District employees will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner. [Policy 8301]

Emergency School-Closing Information

In the event Bigfork Elementary School must be closed, a Bright Arrow message will be sent out to parents and families.

Searches

In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that schools are safe and drug free, District officials may from time to time conduct searches. Such searches are conducted without a warrant and as permitted by law.

Students' Desks and Lockers

Students' desks and lockers are school property and remain under the control and jurisdiction of the school even when assigned to an individual student. Students are fully responsible for the security and contents of the assigned desks and lockers.

Searches of desks or lockers may be conducted at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that they contain articles or materials prohibited by District policy, whether or not a student is present. Searches may also be conducted at random, in accordance with law and District policy. See policy 3231. The parent will be notified if any prohibited items are found in the student's desk or locker.

Drug Detection Dogs

The Superintendent may request the assistance of law enforcement personnel or private individuals to conduct inspections and searches through the use of specially trained dogs.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504")

It is the intent of the District to ensure that students who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services. For those students who need or are believed to need special instruction and/or related services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the District shall establish and implement a system of procedural safeguards. The safeguards shall cover students' identification,evaluation, and educational placement. This system shall include: notice, an opportunity for the student's parent or legal guardian to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with opportunity for participation by the student's parent or legal guardian, and a review procedure. Parents who feel their child may qualify for 504 should contact the building principal to initiate an evaluation. Refer to Board Policy 2162 & 2162P.

Sexual Harassment / Sexual Discrimination

The District encourages staff, parental, and student support in its efforts to address and prevent sexual harassment and sexual discrimination in the public schools. Students and/or parents will discuss their questions or concerns about the expectations in this area with the building Principal.

For purposes of this section and the grievance process, "sexual harassment" means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. A District employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the District on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the District's education program or activity or;

3. “Sexual assault” as defined in 20 USC 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), “dating violence” as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(10), “domestic violence” as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(8) or “stalking” as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(30).

All students are expected to treat other students and District employees with courtesy and respect; to avoid any behaviors known to be offensive; and to stop these behaviors when asked or told to stop. A substantiated complaint against a student or staff member will result in appropriate disciplinary action, according to the nature of the offense. Supportive measures are available to parties involved in Title IX investigations.

The District will notify the parents of all students involved in sexual harassment by student(s) and will notify parents of any incident of sexual harassment or sexual discrimination by an employee. To the greatest extent possible, complaints will be treated as confidential. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation.

A complaint alleging sexual harassment by another student or sexual harassment or sexual discrimination by a staff member may be presented by a student and/or parent in a conference with the Title IX coordinator. The parent or other advisor may accompany the student throughout the complaint process. The conference will be scheduled and held as soon as possible. The principal coordinator District will conduct an appropriate investigation in accordance with Policy 3225 and 3225P. The student will not be required to present a complaint to a person who is the subject of the complaint.

If the resolution of the complaint is not satisfactory to the decision may appeal in accordance with Policy 3225P. For more information about the District’s complaint procedure, see Policy 3225, 3225P, 3225F.

Bullying / Harassment / Intimidation / Hazing

Bullying, harassment, intimidation, or hazing, by students, staff, or third parties, is strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated.

"Bullying" means any harassment, intimidation, hazing, or threatening, insulting, or demeaning gesture or physical contact, including any intentional written, verbal, or electronic communication (“cyberbullying”) or threat directed against a student that is persistent, severe, or repeated, and that substantially interferes with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, that takes place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, at any official school bus stop, or anywhere conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a student or staff member or an interference with school purposes or an educational function.

All complaints about behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. Retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports or is thought to have reported a

violation, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry. [See Policy 3226]

Special Education

The District will provide a free appropriate public education and necessary related services to all children with disabilities residing within the District, as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), provisions of Montana law, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

For students eligible for services under IDEA, the District will follow procedures for identification, evaluation, placement, and delivery of service to children with disabilities, as provided in the current *Montana State Plan under Part B of IDEA*. Refer to Policy 2161 & 2161P.

Parents who feel their child may qualify for Special Education services should contact the building principal to initiate an evaluation.

Student Records

A student's school records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. A cumulative record is maintained for each student from the time the student enters the District until the time the student withdraws or graduates. A copy of this record moves with the student from school to school.

By law, both parents, whether married, separated, or divorced, have access to the records of a student who is under 18 or a dependent for tax purposes. A parent whose rights have been legally terminated will be denied access to the records, if the school is given a copy of the court order terminating these rights. The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students. The Superintendent is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated. Records may be reviewed during regular school hours, upon completion of the written request form. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records. If circumstances prevent a parent or eligible student from inspecting the records, the District will either provide a copy of the requested records or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review the requested records.

Parents of a minor or of a student who is a dependent for tax purposes, the student (if 18 or older), and school officials with legitimate educational interests are the only persons who have general access to a student's records. "School officials with legitimate educational interests" include any employees, agents, or Trustees of the District; cooperatives of which the District is a member; or facilities with which the District contracts for the placement of students with disabilities, as well as their attorneys and consultants, who are: Working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, an individual education plan (IEP) for a student with disabilities under IDEA, or an individually designed program for a

student with disabilities under Section 504; compiling statistical data; investigating or evaluating programs.

The parent's or student's right of access to, and copies of, student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records, such as teachers' personal notes on a student that are shared only with a substitute teacher, records pertaining to former students of the District, and records maintained by school law enforcement officials for purposes other than school discipline do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

Certain officials from various governmental agencies may have limited access to the records. The District forwards a student's records on request and without prior parental consent to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. Records are also released in accordance with court order or lawfully issued subpoena. Unless the subpoena is issued for law enforcement purposes and the subpoena orders that its contents, existence, or the information sought not be disclosed, the District will make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or eligible student in advance of compliance.

Parental consent is required to release the records to anyone else. When the student reaches 18 years of age, only the student has the right to consent to release of records.

Students over 18, and parents of minor students may inspect the student's records and request a correction if the records are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights. If the District refuses the request to amend the records, the requestor has the right to ask for a hearing. If the records are not amended as a result of the hearing, the requestor has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student's record. Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, parents and the student are not allowed to contest a student's grade in a course through this process. Parents or the student have the right to file a complaint with the U. S. Department of Education if they believe the District is not in compliance with the law regarding student records.

Parents may be denied copies of a student's records (1) after the student reaches age 18 and is no longer a dependent for tax purposes; (2) when the student is attending an institution of post-secondary education; (3) if the parent fails to follow proper procedures and pay the copying charge; or (4) when the District is given a copy of a court order terminating the parental rights. If the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals and the parents are unable to view the records during regular school hours, upon written request of the parent, one copy of the record will be provided at no charge.

Certain information about district students is considered directory information and will be released to anyone, including military recruiters and/or post-secondary institutions, who follows procedures for requesting it, unless the parent objects to the release of any or all directory information about the child. The opportunity to exercise such an objection was provided on the form signed by the parent to acknowledge receipt of this handbook. Should circumstances change, the parent can contact the principal to indicate his or her desire to change the original

request. Directory information may include: a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, photographs, dates of attendance, awards received in school, and most recent previous school attended.

Special Education Records

Parents of a student with disabilities who has been provided special education services by the District will be notified when any information that specifically identifies the student is no longer needed. If the parent requests destruction of the information and the time established by law for retention has expired, the records will be destroyed. However, if the expired, the material will be deleted from the records but the records will be maintained until the time has expired.

Textbooks

Board-approved textbooks are provided free of charge for each subject or class. A student who is issued a damaged book should report the damage to the teacher. Any student failing to return a book issued by the school or damaging a book issued by the school may be charged to replace the book.

Transportation - School Sponsored

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. The Principal, however, may make an exception if the parent personally requests that the student be permitted to ride with the parent, or the parent presents — before the scheduled trip — a written request that the student be permitted to ride with an adult designated by the parent.

Buses and Other School Vehicles

The District makes school bus transportation available to all students living three or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school. Further information may be obtained by visiting the school website: www.bigforkschools.org. Students are expected to assist District staff in ensuring that buses remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding school buses, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook. Students must:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner at the designated bus stop nearest home.
- Keep feet, books, band instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle.
- Not deface the bus or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the bus.
- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the bus and before crossing in front of the bus.
- Remain seated while bus is moving.

When students ride in a District van or passenger car, seat belts must be fastened at all times. Misconduct will be punished and bus-riding privileges may be suspended.

Transporting Students with District / Personal Vehicle

Any person transporting students in a personal vehicle must provide the District with proof of current car insurance.

Videotaping of Students

The District uses video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District facilities and equipment. Video cameras may be used in locations as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Students in violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, building rules, or law shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Others may be referred to law enforcement agencies.

Video recordings may become a part of a student's educational record. The District shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws related to record maintenance and retention.

Visitors

Parents and others are welcome to visit District schools. Bigfork School District has a restricted access system, all visitors must be buzzed in at the front entrance and check in with the school secretary. All visitors will be asked to wear a visitor identification lanyard while on campus. Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time are permitted only with approval of the Principal and teacher and so long as their duration or frequency does not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt the normal school environment.

Receipt of Handbook

“I have received a copy of the Bigfork Elementary School Student Handbook for 2026-2027. I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I may need during the school year. I understand that all students will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in the handbook.”

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent:_____

Date:_____